

# **Social Dance and Wellbeing – an ethnographic study of two folk social dance settings**

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## Abstract

### ***Social Dance and Wellbeing – an ethnographic study of two folk social dance settings***

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Sociable folk dancing in the UK is an organised group activity in which a significant number of people take part, often practising folk styles which have their origins in other countries. These groups are generally not run for profit, operate under the radar of media attention, and consequentially their activities remain largely hidden from view. This thesis addresses the fact that there have been no in-depth studies of these groups. It reports on the findings of a detailed ethnographic research project, to offer in-sights into the practices and motivations of participants in social dance. The thesis answers the key question: 'What is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?'.

An interdisciplinary and ethnographic research approach was adopted to investigate two such folk styles: Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian. This approach allowed research participants to make a significant contribution to the focus of the research, and to inform the subsidiary questions: 'What are the concerns and interests of those involved in social folk dance?', 'What is it that makes involvement in these dance practices so appealing?', and 'What are the overall benefits of being involved?'

The research produced an interpretive account of these practices, through investigating sites of participation in these dance styles in the UK, which were explored by means of immersive involvement in their dance practices. This gave an insight into the way in which participation was organised and managed, and allowed for introductions to be made which were followed up with thirty in-depth interviews.

The study revealed that despite the stylistic differences between the two dance styles and how they are practised, both nevertheless benefitted participants in similar ways. That dance events are organised on a not-for-profit basis was particularly important to participants, and encouraged loyalty and cooperation, promoting feelings of empowerment and ownership. An atmosphere of supportive inclusion was also built in to the loose organisation of events and activities, which allowed a consensus to develop where social attitudes and ideas could be negotiated, cultivated, and shared. This created a sense of belonging to an unboundaried, and fluid community or social network, a safe environment in which participants were able to experience dance as a communicative and expressive dialogue between individuals and within the group. This thesis argues that participants found their involvement in these dance styles socially and personally satisfying, and that this made a considerable contribution to their individual wellbeing.

The research found that sociable folk dancing served as a vehicle for community, improving participants' sense of self-worth, supporting creativity, and well-being. These findings complement clinical research that champions dance, and social dance in particular, as a healthy and worthwhile leisure activity. This thesis supports the results of such scientific studies into the benefits of dance by providing supporting evidence from within a social setting. This has implications for further research, and for policy and practice, whether dance activities are pursued formally or informally and whatever their aim.

## Acknowledgements

*Dedicated to the Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dancers and musicians who welcomed me into their worlds.*

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## Introduction

The roots of this thesis are in my own un-questioning participation in European folk social dance for over fifteen years, as both a musician and dancer. This type of sociable folk dancing is popularly understood as being part of a continuing tradition from former times that has been enjoyed by people in rural communities in various parts of Europe. My initial thought was to investigate for my own benefit, so that I would then be able to explain to others, who are not in these circles, what it is all about. I had found that what I was involved in was difficult to describe, and I became fascinated by the preconceived ideas and perceptions about folk social dance that I encountered, when speaking to people who had not come across it before. I also felt challenged by, and curious about some of the views that I encountered, which led me to question my own understanding of these activities, and also to appreciate how little was known about folk social dance. I found many parallels with Ruth Finnegan's study of local amateur music making, *The Hidden Musicians* (1989), in that for most people, folk social dance was almost invisible. However, meetings of dancers and musicians, and events and activities to do with folk dance, folk social dance in particular, are organised on a regular basis throughout the country.

Currently in the UK what is referred to as folk music and social dance covers a great variety of dance styles, some of which are only practiced in a small number of locations or by few participants. Dance styles include Irish and Scottish set dance, Scottish and English country-dance, Playford, Contra, American Square Dance, Bretton, Cajun, Zydeco, Salsa, Argentinean Tango, Klezmer, and Scandinavian folk dance to name but a few, and each regularly organises its own distinctive events and activities. There is some crossover of participants between dance styles, but overall, each dance style attracts its own following and participants tend to be conservative in their choice of which dance styles to be involved in.

On closer examination, I was interested to find that the majority of the dance styles practiced have their origins in the folk cultures of geographically distant places outside the British Isles. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that these are examples of micro-cultures in diaspora (Slobin 1992), where people who trace their origins to another country, culture or ethnic group, form an organisation that

celebrates these origins in their new adopted home; but they are not. These activities are very much 'home grown', in that they are based on music and dance styles that have been taken up by people in the UK, the majority of whom have little or no connection with its origins. Rarely reported about, folk music and social dance events and activities in the UK operate below the radar of commercialism and media attention, generally being non-profit making and self-sustaining, and run on a low budget. Usually these events and activities are organised by dedicated enthusiasts and form part of a recognisable sociocultural unit. Generally, this unit is a socially uniform group of participants, with the age of the vast majority of the participants ranging from people in their thirties to those in retirement. Commonly, individuals experience a supportive spirit of togetherness and closeness through being involved in the activities organised by these groups.

The shared characteristics of these small groups, which are based on a diversity of folk-derived music and social dance styles, raised my active curiosity about participation in these practices. The more I looked at these dance settings, the more I realised that they warranted further investigation. This thesis builds on earlier research on and around these topics (Kiddy 2008, 2009, 2011), and here it aims to shed some light on the question; what is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?

From the wide variety of folk-derived music and social dance styles practiced in the UK, the focus of this research is two particular groups who take part in very different dance styles with contrasting histories and origins. The first of these groups is involved in the practice of Scandinavian folk music and social dance, whose origins are primarily from Sweden and Norway, but can also include music and dances from Denmark and Finland. In the UK, the attention of these participants is mostly focused on dances that have their origins in Sweden. The second of these groups practice Cajun and Zydeco, which are styles of dance and music that originate from the southeast of North America, and in particular the region of Louisiana. Although Cajun and Zydeco are themselves two distinct styles of music and dance, outside of their place of origin they are most often associated and practiced together, and their practice in the UK is intertwined. Both of these groups are involved in styles of folk music and dance that are practiced regularly at small national and regional events around the country, and serve as interesting and contrasting examples that will be



explored in more detail later in this thesis. Neither Cajun and Zydeco, or Scandinavian folk social dance practices in the UK have been the subject of academic study. This study was conducted between January 2010 and March 2014, and is based on ethnographic research and fieldwork that included involvement in events and activities organised around these two dance styles, and interviews with participants.

This thesis approaches the area of investigation from an interdisciplinary perspective, through reference to works from a number of scholarly fields and sub-fields that have relevance to what we do with music and dance, and their place in our lives. Music plays an essential role in dancing, it is therefore not only an accompaniment but it also inspires, and drives deliberate rhythmic interpretation through movement. Physical involvement in music, from tapping a foot to the rhythm through to dancing, also stimulates and activates an individual's ability to perceive music; in this sense music and dance are inseparable (Bojner Howitz 2004). Both the study of music and the study of dance have gone through a considerable transformation since the 1980s, with an expansion into the social, cultural, and political aspects of these subjects (Reed 1998: p. 503). However, very little of this interest has been directed at what can generally be termed contemporary folk culture, and folk music and folk social dance are important areas that may have been as yet overlooked in both music studies, and dance studies, resulting in a lack of research in these areas. The adoption of an interdisciplinary approach therefore has the potential to bring new insights into areas of music-based activities such as this.

This research has gained much from adopting a wider perspective and by looking at work in fields such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, cultural studies, cultural geography, and philosophy. Through this strategy, and by following a more holistic approach embraced by the ethnographic methodology that is to be described in Chapter 1, a more complete and accurate picture of involvement in these practices is revealed. The aim of this study has been to discover the importance of these folk practices to those involved and to draw some conclusions as to its relevance in their lives, it has therefore benefitted greatly from taking this broader view.

Before going into detail about the study, however, I wish to position this research in relation to other related scholarly works, through a review and discussion of some of

the available literature, while specific issues touched upon in this thesis will be dealt with in the relevant chapters. I shall do this by, firstly positioning this study in relation to other ethnographic studies of folk music and dance, and other similar work in the area of study; the history and development of a field of interest often informs present ideas and practice. Secondly, I shall look at how folk music and folk dance have been written and thought about in the past, in order to position this study in relation to a folk paradigm in the UK. Thirdly, I shall take a closer look at the literature around the particular dance styles that are the subject of this research, Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance, as this may also have an influence on these practices in the UK. Fourthly, participants in these dance styles report benefits from their participation that indicate feelings of enhanced wellbeing; I shall therefore look at writing that connects music, dance, and wellbeing. Finally, I shall look at how wellbeing has been conceptualised in the past, and at theoretical works that have a bearing in this study, before describing the chapter structure of this thesis.

### Studies of Music and Dance Practices

Folk music and social dance has been a neglected area in the ethnography of music and in popular music studies in general, and the scarcity of work reflects an overarching issue concerning the marginalisation of dance scholarship across disciplines such as cultural studies and anthropology (Desmond 1997). A special issue of the journal *Popular Music* was inspired by the connection between music and dance, but also 'sought to address a dearth of work on popular music and actual dancing practices.' (Cohen and Fairley 2006; p. 345) This is the case even though interest in what people do with music has increased in recent years, as shown by the number of studies whose focus has been on music in social life. These studies have been based on a range of methodological approaches and interests within the social sciences, and have addressed a number of important questions (Bull 2000; Cohen 1995; De Nora 2000; Frith 2003; Dodds and Cook 2013). The few studies that have taken folk social dance as their context reflect this range of methodologies and interests. The studies that have been conducted have a small number of common themes and tend to focus on a restricted number of dance styles. In the following

section, I shall discuss some of this literature, firstly by looking at ethnographic studies, and then looking more broadly at studies from other disciplines. This is by no means an exhaustive survey of literature; however, I have endeavoured to indicate trends and identify central concerns that have been considered. These studies help to place this research within the academic context of existing literature.

Several small-scale ethnographic studies of folk social dances have been published mostly as journal articles. Skinner, for example, discusses gender and feminist philosophies in an ethnographic study of Salsa participants in Belfast (Skinner 2008), while Wartluft (2009) takes an ethnographic perspective on issues of gender in Tango clubs and Salons in Buenos Aires. Pietrobruno discusses identity and cultural commodity in an ethnographic study, which explores Salsa within the Montreal dance scene (Pietrobruno 2006). Wilkinson conducted a comprehensive study in the 1990s of the social dance events held in Brittany, known as Fest Noz and Fest Deiz, and on the practices surrounding them. He was concerned with their organisational structure and its relation to professionalism, and with their cultural and socioeconomic significance (Wilkinson 2003). The politics of gender and the body are issues looked at by Cowan in her ethnographic studies of traditional dance in northern Greece by focussing on identity and tradition (Cowan 1988) and the politics of gender (Cowan 1990). Urqia takes an ethnographic approach to the study of authenticity in London Salsa clubs (Urqia 2004).

The ethnographic methodology was developed out of anthropological studies, and the field of dance anthropology, which considers dance within a cultural and social context. It has only been since the late 1970s, however, that dance anthropology has been recognised as a legitimate field of inquiry (Reed 1998). Up until this time, dance only enjoyed a marginal status within the field of anthropology, and recent studies have largely dealt with 'the politics of dance and the relations between culture, body, and movement' (ibid: p. 505). In these works, the attention has therefore been on the discussion of issues such as ethnicity (cf. Kealiinohomoku 1970), nationalism (cf. Babadzan 2000; Jenkins 2007), gender (cf. Hanna 1988; Novack 1990) and ritual (cf. Bloch 1974). However, the focus of such studies has been on formalised forms of dance and not contemporary participatory, or social, dance as in this study.

Looking more generally, in research fields other than ethnography, very few studies have focussed on folk social dance in the UK. Revill's article on French folk social dance is notable as it uses this dance practice as the context for assessing the usefulness of 'nonrepresentational theory' (after Thrift 2000) rather than social theory, in human and cultural Geography (Revill 2004). In other studies, Argentinean Tango and Salsa are the two dance styles that have received the most amount of attention, but despite bodies of work existing on the music of these styles, until recently, explorations of the social context of these two dance styles have been sparse, and the literature reflects a narrow preoccupation with similar themes. A small number of politically orientated studies, for example, have been based on the Argentinean Tango. Schwartz (1992) focuses on the sociological and political meaning of the Tango dance, and Archetti also discusses issues around gender with the focus on masculinity as expressed in the Argentinean Tango, along with other contexts in Argentina (Archetti 1999). Other studies have examined how Tango is practiced outside of its country of origin. For example, Román-Velázquez, has discussed globalisation and cultural identities in connection to the practice of Salsa in London (Román-Velázquez 1999). In contrast, the concern of Skinner, is with identity and glocalisation, as Salsa is imported into cosmopolitan areas around the world (Skinner 2007). Taking another approach, Aparicio (1998) takes an historical and musicological interpretation of gender in Salsa music and dance.

Until relatively recently, the field of dance studies itself has also been limited in its scope, concentrating on types of dance presented to an audience and 'high art' rather than dance in its popular forms. Dance studies, it has been suggested, 'has been overshadowed by work on the history or representational practices of concert dance, especially modern dance and ballet' (Desmond 2000: p. 48), confirming an idea that 'classical ballet dancing seems accepted as the crowning achievement of dance art in Western culture' (Seigel 1998: p. 92). A recent introductory text for dance studies describes its concerns as being 'the training of dance performance skills, compositional methods, practices and applications, dance history and contextual studies, dance pedagogy and dance technology' (Butterworth 2012). The focus of dance studies has therefore been the performance and presentation of dance and has balanced 'practical training in performance and choreography with vital academic studies' (Roehampton 2015). Social dance has therefore not been a

favoured topic within dance studies, and studies of popular or vernacular dance have been a neglected area of interest. However, where dance studies has overlapped with other scholarly disciplines, such as anthropology (Gell 1985; Novak 1990; Cohen Bull 1997; Buckland 1999; Sommer 2009) and sociology (Thomas 1993, 1995; Thomas and Miller 1997; Daly 1997; McMains 2003) social dance sits more comfortably.

Dance scholarship covers a broad area of practice with studies coming from many different disciplinary backgrounds, and this has resulted in a wide range of interpretations of the term social dance, based on different ideas of sociability and social connectedness. Dance styles referred to as social dance have included group dancing such as Irish Set Dance (O'Connor 1997) and Scottish Céilidh (Shoupe 2001), couple dancing such as Rock n' Roll (Rosenbaum and Prinsky 1987) and Lyndy Hop (Monaghan 2003) and solo dancing within contemporary Rave culture (Pini 1997), at discotheques (Malbon 1999) and at Indie music concerts (Boyd 2006). Dance scholarship about social dance has therefore covered an assortment of dance styles and choreographies, and a variety of social settings. In addition, clinical studies that have looked into the benefits of social dance to the elderly for example, have often not specified what they mean by the term, or the dance style used in their work (Verghese 2006; Judge 2003). Further difficulties arise because for many years and in many texts, the term social dance has been used interchangeably, and has been synonymous with ballroom dance (Frank 1963; Desmond 1994). This in itself can lead to confusion, as ballroom dance can cover a range of dance settings from sociable dancing (Cooper and Thomas 2002; Skinner 2009) to competitive dance (Penny 1999; McMains 2006; Marion 2008).

In this landscape of dance scholarship, where the label 'social dance' has been applied to divergent dance forms and contexts, it is perhaps pertinent to describe briefly, the understanding of social dance applied in this thesis. As mentioned earlier, folk social dance has attracted little in the way of scholarly or media attention, and remains almost invisible, unlike costumed folk dances that are performed on stage. Many dance styles enjoy separate practices such as this, where the emphasis may be on sociability, or on performance in front of an audience, often as competition. Ballroom dance exemplifies this, as its competitive practices are especially apparent in western cultures (in particular the worldwide TV franchise of

*'Strictly Come Dancing'*), and yet there also exist many clubs, societies and classes which also practice non-competitive ballroom dancing. Salsa, Lindy Hop, and Tango are other examples where competitive practices run in parallel with a variety of social practices, although it is important to note that practice may not always be strictly polarised in this way, and some social settings may encompass both. For the benefit of this thesis, social dance excludes dance that is performed in front of an audience whether for competition or otherwise; an idea that will be expanded upon later in this chapter. Social dance is, however, practiced in a public environment, although the existence of 'gate keepers' cannot be ignored. In addition, varying degrees of convention do exist, and while ballroom has been described as 'formal social dance' (Thomas 1997: p. 90), the folk social dance considered in this thesis may be considered informal social dance, in common with other aspects of the folk genre.

Despite the importance of the literature identified in this chapter, and the important contribution it has made to the understanding of folk music and social dance, there are still areas of music and dance practice that have been overlooked within an already neglected field of study. Overall, existing studies focus on a narrow area of interest, and on a limited number of dance styles. In particular, there have been no in-depth studies of folk social dance in the UK, and this thesis therefore advances an area of research that has until now been missing.

With this as context, I now wish to give an overview of the key literature that will be drawn upon to inform this thesis. It is by no means an exhaustive evaluation of all the relevant literature; however, this outline will help position this work within the larger scheme of scholarship and that will be of relevance to some of the issues discussed in later chapters. Additional supporting literature, of relevance to particular topics covered in each chapter, will be addressed within the main body of the thesis. Firstly, I shall discuss the literature related to 'folk'; beginning by looking at this in an historic context, following this through by looking at how folk dance and then folk music have been considered in scholarly works. I shall then move on to review the available literature that is of relevance to the two styles of dance in this case study.

## The Context of Folk Music and Social Dance

### i) The Notion of Folk

The notion of folk as a category of artistic endeavour dates from the use of the term 'folklore' used by William Thoms, in a letter published in the journal *The Athenaeum* in 1846 (Georges 1995), who used it to describe 'the traditions, customs, and superstitions of the uncultured classes' (Scholes 1955; p. 366). It is also derived from German word *Volk*, as in 'the people as a whole', as applied to popular nationalistic music by German Romantics at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lloyd 1975; p. 13). The International Folk Music Council conference in 1952 devised the following definition of folk music:

Folk music is music that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission. It is the product of evolution and is dependent on circumstances of continuity, variation and selection. (Karpeles 1955; p. 6)

This definition was at the time considered unsatisfactory, and in spite of attempts since, a clear definition of folk, folk music, or folk dance remains elusive (Middleton 1990). What can be understood from this, however, is a notion of a folk aesthetic that pre-dates Karpeles' attempt at a definition, by which folk practices are valued, and against which folk can be judged. 'Folk' is therefore represented by an idea of a continuous tradition, whereby folk practice is passed on from person to person, by oral and aural means and by observation and imitation, from one generation to the next. Folk practice, involves an appreciation of lineage that may be represented in a number of ways, but which is not written down.

Perhaps the lack of a clear definition of folk reflects the fact that the folk paradigm may have many consistent features, but may also vary internationally according to local cultural variations. The focus of discussion here is therefore fixed on those influences that may affect attitudes, opinions, and approaches to folk in the UK. Some of the earliest and most influential literature concerning folk music and dance in England is that written by the folk music collectors of the early twentieth century, most notable amongst whom is Cecil Sharp (1859 –1924) (Heaney 2004). In his lifetime, Sharp published many collections of folk songs and dances and was influential through his theoretical work, *English folk song: some conclusions*,

published in 1907 (Sharp 1972). He took a culturally deterministic<sup>1</sup> view to explain the persistence of folk music and dance in some areas of England, where these had been practiced by successive generations. He argued that this folk culture belonged to a pre-industrial England, and was practiced by the 'unlettered', 'common people', 'whose mental development has been due not to any formal system of training or education, but solely to environment, communal association, and direct contact with the ups and downs of life' (ibid. p. 3). These folk he considered to be 'the remnants of the peasantry', surviving in 'those country districts, which, by reason of their remoteness, have escaped the infection of modern ideas' (ibid. p. 4). Sharp was concerned that folk song and dance practices were dying-out in England in the face of increasing modernisation, and he became instrumental in initiating a revival. The methods, motivations and conclusions of Cecil Sharp and others, such as H.E.D. Hammond (cf. Purslow 1968), Frank Kidson and Mary Neal (1915), and Lucy Broadwood and John Fuller Maitland (1883), have been highly influential but have not been without their critics. It was a long time, however, before scholars such as A.L. Lloyd (1967), influenced by socialist ideology, and more recently analytical work by Dave Harker (1972, 1985) offered a significant alternative to Sharp's analysis.

An abstract in-depth discussion or assessment of folk music and dance as a product of either culture or class, is not within the scope of this study. However, it can be noted that underpinning such views is a largely romantic idea of the past, for example, projected in images of 'Merrie England', Maypoles and Morris Men. Such romantic images are misleading, and recent scholarly work by Vic Gammon, critically evaluates Sharp's work in terms of images such as these, in the light of more recent research and what is known of the folk songs and dances they are based on (Gammon 2003). By using a wider range of resources in order to gain a more balanced picture of the past, Gammon has tried to understand 'the views of the world and of life that the songs reveal, and the textual and musical ways those views are expressed' (Gammon 2008a; p. 1), while admitting that these can only ever be impressions subject to modern day creativity. A belief in these ideas as a continuous

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural determinism is the stance that common patterns of behaviour, attitudes, and values which persist for generations are the result of cultural factors rather than biological or other factors. This dichotomy is sometimes distilled to the equation, nurture verse nature. (Chandler, and Munday, 2011, p. 84)



tradition, however, is influential to the present day and may be relevant to those who currently practice folk social dance and who have participated in this study.

A. L. Lloyd was eager to recognise the importance of the songs and dances of the working poor from outside of rural communities, and considered industrial songs and sea shanties as also part of the folk tradition. However, the concept of tradition is itself contentious. The Marxist position adhered to by Lloyd is that folk music and dance are the cultural property of the rural and industrial working class, and that this has been borrowed and reshaped by 'bourgeois' collectors and promoters. This reshaping brings into question the concepts of heritage and tradition, and this is explored by Eric Hobsbawm (1989). Hobsbawm has argued convincingly that much of what is considered today to be traditional is an invented idea of the past (Hobsbawm 1989). He proposes that much of what is taken for granted as traditional was created during the nineteenth century, and has little to do with our 'roots'. Hobsbawm cites the example of a distinct Highland culture and tradition and in particular the Scottish kilt as a 'retrospective invention' (ibid. pp. 15 - 41).

Similarly, folk practices can be seen as a re-creation or re-enactment of the past of 'common people' and of their activities, frozen at some vague point in times gone by. In this way, this action can be understood as honouring, preserving, and connecting to particular roots, by continuing and replicating activities from that time, such as dances and songs. However, the very nature of folk is that it is an oral and aural tradition and little is documented, which when it is performed today, inevitably results in much being left to the creativity of the practitioners and also therefore of the documenter. Such interpretations then, may lead to what Hobsbawm calls invented traditions and a heritage that may have little or no foundation. This is a particularly important consideration for the current practices of folk music and social dance in the UK, which borrow significantly from places and traditions that many practitioners have little or no connection with.

The tradition of English folk song and dance is the subject of Georgina Boyes study, *The Imagined Village: culture, ideology, and the English folk revival*, (1993). This is the only general history of the English folk music movement published to date, and she suggests that this history has a strong influence on the attitudes to, and interests in, folk music and dance of present day participants. Boyes gives a detailed account of the context and influences that led to the changing attitudes and approaches to

folk music and dance during the twentieth century. In proposing a context for the work of Cecil Sharp, she locates Sharp within the central anthropological paradigm of many of his contemporaries at the turn of the twentieth century, in which the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theories was dominant. These theories were used to explain social and cultural change and the 'advance' from rural to industrial society, and cultural survivalist theories explained the continued existence of folk traditions within this paradigm. She also discusses the influence of leftist politics and ideals, and suggests that the interest in folk music and dance can be seen against a more general backdrop of a perceived threat to national heritage, and as a response to cultural changes, in particular to urbanisation and industrialisation. She suggests that a folk, romantic idyll offers the possibility for the construction of cultural alternatives based on a more natural state embodying equality, communalism, and creativity, and a platform for the articulation of basic emotions, and this also gives folk its present day impetus. Brocken, in his work on folk in the period from the 1940s to the 1990s, the 'second folk revival' (Brocken 2003: p. 12), considers how ideas rooted in the folk revival of the early part of the twentieth century were built upon, and considers the continuing influence of left-wing politics and the influence of the music industry on folk music. Both of these works have much to contribute to the discussion of how folk practices are considered in contemporary UK, which may be reflected in the attitudes of the folk music and dance participants in this study.

Much of the recent scholarly literature on folk, has concentrated on the post-war revival of folk in Britain and America, and Livingston (1999) uses folk music as the starting point for forming a general theoretical model of music revival, expanding her outlook to include music in many parts of the world. The American folk revival of the 1950s and 60s, has been the subject of discussion by many authors who have combined academic discourse with personal memoirs and biographies (cf. Posen 1993; Cantwell 1996). Folk singer and musician Dick Weissman has also given his account of this folk revival from a performer's perspective (Weissman 2006). Ronald Cohen has written extensively about the recent history of folk music and its revival in the United States of America (Cohen 1995, 2002, 2008). In an introduction to folk music, using firsthand accounts of the folk revival, historian Cohen has used interviews with those involved, to examine both the popular and the commercial aspects of folk in America and in Britain, and compared these with accounts from

modern performers (Cohen 2006). The tension between tradition and the commercial music industry, has been a theme in many works, but is discussed in-depth by Tachi (2004), and by Scully (2008). The work by Brocken, mentioned earlier, places the second folk revival in Britain in an historic and ideological context, but also concludes with a discussion of this tension (Brocken 2003). Sweers (2005), however, discusses a more culturally based analysis, by focussing on the adoption of electric and rock instrumentation which became known as folk rock, comparing the differing influences and motivations of the American and the British revivals.

Keegan-Philips and Winter (2014), however, expand on the theme of the longstanding tension between tradition and the commercial music industry, by looking at the most recent rise in interest in folk, since 2002, as a resurgence rather than a revival. They use the rise in popularity of folk festivals to exemplify the 'apparently contradictory coexistence of a folk ethos, privileging amateurism and culturally philanthropic motivations, with a growing commercialisation and professionalization' (ibid :p. 498). What has more recently been labelled 'nu-folk' (Devine 2010; McCormick 2011), which is part of this resurgence, represents a new uneasy compromise between these tensions.

## ii) The Study of Folk Dance

Historically, the study of dance has been given less importance and has gained less prominence than many other art forms such as music (Karkou 2012), and there may be several reasons for this marginalisation. Cultural attitudes to dance and the use of the body have, for example, had negative associations that can be traced back to the ideas of Plato, Christians adopted these same ideas in Europe in the Middle Ages. These ideas were further reinforced in the Renaissance era by Descartes' dualism (Karkou and Sanderson 2006). In discussing more recent attitudes to dance, it has been argued that dance has also had negative connotations due to the perception that it is principally a female activity, and it has therefore not been taken seriously (Sanderson 1996, 2001; Meekims 2000). Where there has been research into dance these studies have followed very similar approaches, and like the studies mentioned above, have focussed on certain areas and almost ignored others.

Critics of dance studies have commented that until relatively recently, existing studies have adopted a very narrow conceptual framework. General histories of

dance have taken an evolutionary approach, starting with the so-called 'primitive', moving via folk dance and non-European classical dance forms to Western theatrical dance (Grau 1993: p. 197). This evolutionary continuum implies that folk dance is 'simple' and less developed than more formal western dance, and is therefore less sophisticated. The situation is compounded by the fact that in dance studies in general, there is also a recognisable hierarchy through which dance is evaluated, and social dance appears at the bottom of the pile (Siegle 1998: p. 92). This background may account in some way for why folk social dance has received little attention. However, as mentioned earlier, dance studies have also generally regarded contemporary folk dance as performance, and therefore as an 'art form', rather than a wider social activity (Desmond 1997: p.155). The focus of present day dance analysis, for example, has been on formalised types of 'art' dance such as ballet and modern dance, and when this approach has been applied to folk dance, it is represented as an impertinent and sanitised type of art form (cf. Adshead 1988: pp. 21–40). There have therefore been a considerable number of barriers to the study of folk social dance, which has led to this being an under developed area of academic enquiry.

### iii) The Study of Folk Music

The study of folk music can also be problematic and in many ways similar to the study of folk dance. Like folk dance, folk music has also in the past been regarded as 'primitive', with its place on an evolutionary continuum and subject to placement low down in an evaluative music hierarchy. The study of music, however, has been well established, and has been developing for much longer than the study of dance, suggesting that the present position for the study of dance, can be compared with that of music in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Adshead 1988). This is largely because the systems of notation and recording of music have developed and improved, and therefore assisted in this study. However, I would argue that this does not aide the study of folk music, and has possibly been a hindrance, as systems of notation are antithetical to the folk aesthetic. Folk music can be defined as music that is created through a process that depends on a continuous tradition of oral and aural transmission and composition, and a process of continuous evolution through performance. There are no adequate records of this process; in effect, it has no recorded history prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and there can be no definitive

recordings of it. In addition, this suggests that folk music is never absolute and is highly dependent upon context. This highlights some significant challenges in the study of folk music, and contrasts, and in many ways conflicts with established ways in which music has been studied, because these established methods belong to a written tradition. In order to study folk music and dance in accordance with established academic disciplines, folk music and dance must be removed from their context, and must therefore undergo a change in order to be viewed from an academic perspective. This, I would argue, results in a paradox, because where folk music is removed from its context it becomes something other than folk music, just as folk dance, when taken out of context, becomes a sanitised version of the original<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to this, as a commercial genre, folk music is generally not as fashionable or marketable as many other music genres, and currently lacks the potency needed for success within the commercial market place. Occasionally certain artists, or fusions of folk music with other music genres, have made inroads into commercial popular culture. 'World' and 'Roots' Music; selectively chosen folk musics from 'elsewhere' that are judged not to be too esoteric for Western tastes, have been found to be marketable (Manuel 1990; Taylor 1997), and Cajun and Zydeco music is a good example of this. This reflects a fascination with the 'exotic' and 'the other', but in general terms, the commercial role of folk music is relatively low key. Brocken traces the divergence and separation of folk and popular music in the UK, and the origins and causes for this. He argues that this divergence is unnecessary, and that to counter this trend, there has to be an acknowledgement that neither is superior to the other (Brocken 2003), thus reflecting the music hierarchy discussed earlier. There are folk clubs in most cities and even in small towns and villages especially in rural areas, and hundreds of folk festivals are held every year in the UK<sup>3</sup>, and have been gaining in popularity (cf. Keegan-Philips and Winter 2014). These clubs and festivals are often run by volunteer enthusiasts, and these events are clearly very popular. The folk music practiced in these contexts is often detached from the

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of this would be the use of folk music and dance used in classical ballet where it has been choreographed for character dance, and some choreographed folk performances that are a pastiche of folk dances from a particular region.

<sup>3</sup> As a measure of popularity, Towersey Village Festival for example, attracts approximately 10,000 visitors over one weekend, and Sidmouth Folk Week, attracts over 65,000 people for a weeklong event. (source <http://www.mrscasey.co.uk/History.html>.)

mainstream and commercial music industry, and this has become an axiom of this type of music that sometimes proudly identifies itself as not being as commercially driven as other music genres (cf. Kiddy 2009, for a discussion on this). These factors are perhaps reflected in the low profile of folk music on music courses in academic establishments<sup>4</sup>. While many such courses also advertise themselves as studying popular music, they rarely cover folk music, leaving open questions of what the 'popular' in popular music refers to, and how this is defined (cf. Kasabian 2007). This may also be considered ironic when the original meaning of 'folk' is taken into account as 'the people as a whole' (Lloyd 1969: p. 13), and therefore by inference, popular.

An awareness of the issues discussed above is essential to sensitise the research to differences that may be apparent between the perspectives taken by those who are inside these activities and those who take a more detached view and may be outside this environment. This literature also identifies several perspectives on the past that may influence participants in folk social dance, which includes the invention of traditions, a perceived threat to heritage and a response to change, and the construction of a cultural alternative. The discussion will now focus on the literature concerning the two styles of folk music and social dance that are the subject of these case studies. As research that is interdisciplinary and led by ethnographic fieldwork, it also serves to further contextualise this study.

### Cajun and Zydeco Music and Dance

There is very little written about Cajun and Zydeco culture that pre-dates the 1950s, and for many centuries its people and culture were marginalised by the dominant Anglo community in the southeastern region of the United States of America. The

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<sup>4</sup> According to the UCAS course finder, only Newcastle University offers an undergraduate course in Folk and Traditional Music. Folk music is included as an optional unit on the Popular Music degree course at Goldsmiths College in London, however, as a unit or module it is not common. Some courses incorporate folk music in modules that cover world musics. The term 'World Music' is itself problematic; however, seven courses in the UK offer this as an element of their degree course. This is only a very cursory survey of the present situation, and folk music, world music etc., may well be subsumed within titles that are more elaborate, and in addition, the UCAS search engine may have its limitations. However, considering these caveats, this does give an indication of the low profile of folk music in academic institutions. Another major genre whose position in the popular music spectrum is ambiguous is jazz, however this fares considerably better than Folk music. (from <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch/> accessed July 2010)

first known reference of Cajun dancing was reported in 1803 by French immigrant and traveller C. C. Robin, who wrote about the Arcadians, 'They love to dance most of all, more than any other people in the colony' (quoted in Brasseaux 2009; p. 39). In 1887, another traveller, George Washington Cable, described a dancing event in his travel writings (Duke 1988). These writers were interested in these dances as part of Louisiana cultural life, and did not record or document the details of the music and the styles of dance. The folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax started his career of field recordings, between 1934 and 1937, in Louisiana and its surrounding states, by making the first recordings of Cajun and Zydeco music and song (Lomax 1999). The cultural geographer Lauren Post documented Cajun dance during the 1930s, independently of Alan Lomax, and in his later work in the 1950s, Post documented other dance activities in Louisiana (LSU 2011; Post 1974), however, until recently, there has been little scholarly interest in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance.

It was not until the folk revival of the 1950s and 60s, and following increased acceptance of Cajun and Zydeco culture over previous years, that there were signs of Cajun and Zydeco music and dance losing its stigma. Mark Mattern describes this history, together with an analysis of the political strategies that led, by the 1980s, to Cajun and Zydeco culture being accepted and eventually celebrated (Mattern 2006). As a consequence of this folk revival, a huge amount of music and dance related material has been published, such that in quantity, it is likely to have overtaken the amount of material relating to many other folk music and dance styles. This material includes compilations of recorded music, transcriptions of popular and traditional music, dance guides, histories, and biographical accounts. In these recent publications, the boundary between Cajun and Zydeco has become less well defined, reflecting an apparent trend since this revival to combine these two distinctive music and dance forms under the general heading of Cajun. This may be illustrative of the transition to, and acceptance of a less divided society more generally in the United States (US), as the division between these two dance styles was originally based on racial lines; Cajun being largely white and Francophone, and Zydeco black and African influenced.

General histories of Cajun and Zydeco music, containing discographies, biographies and interviews, have also been published in large numbers for popular consumption,

and these very often include descriptions and references to dance events (cf. Gould 1992; Broven 1992; Bernard 1996). Many of these focus on interviews with musicians (Sandmel 1999; Ancelet 1999) and one is an encyclopaedic work of biographical notes on musicians, discographies, and recordings of Cajun and Zydeco artists (Nyhan, Rollins and Babb 1997). More scholarly works include Tisserand's detailed history of Zydeco, as told through interviews with musicians, which has an illustrative companion CD (Tisserand 1998). One particular publication, *Cajun Music, A reflection of a people* (Savoy 1986), is highly regarded, and its author, Anne Savoy, is a member of a Cajun family who have been musicians for many generations and perform internationally. It takes an instructive approach, giving many technical details and comparisons with other music styles in order to document the evolution of Cajun music. It includes music and song examples, and details about Cajun fiddle style, instrumentation, and song types, as well as how the genre has evolved and adapted to new instruments and technology.

The majority of publications of a more academic nature, have also only been published since the 1960s folk revival and the much greater interest in Cajun and Zydeco culture since the 1980s. Many of these works have taken a closer analytical approach to Cajun culture, and have for example surveyed the cultural history and geography of Louisiana Cajuns (cf. Estaville 2001; Spitzer 2003) and the influence of Cajun music in specific areas of the southeast of the United States (cf. Minton 1996; Borders 1988; Lagarde 2003). Doucet, however, has taken a cultural approach to the analysis of Cajun songs and music, and has looked at what is represented in them (Doucet 1989). Charles Stivale's studies of Cajun music and dance, have taken a cultural and ethnographic approach, and have focused on the part music and dance have played in producing a Cajun cultural identity, and he discusses this in the context of an authentic Cajun culture (Stivale 2000, 2003). Mark De Witt traces the cultural history of the accordion, and its introduction into Cajun and Zydeco music. This marked a significant cultural shift, and he examines how its introduction changed Cajun music in form and idiom, discussing this in the context of modern performances (DeWitt 2003). More recently, however, De Witt has also conducted an ethnographic study of Cajun and Zydeco music performance in Northern California (De Witt 2008).



## Scandinavian Folk Music and Dance

What has come to be understood as the folk revival of the early twentieth century had its first manifestations in Scandinavia, in particular in Sweden and in Denmark (Koudal 1993). In Sweden, the *Svenska Folkdancen Vänner* (Friends of Swedish Dance) was founded in 1893, followed in Denmark by the *Foreningen for Folkedansens Fremme* (Society for Folk Dance Promotion), in 1900, by collectors such as Hans Johansen, J. C. Nielsen, Carl Olsen, and Jens Peter Dam (ibid.). Wolfram suggests that it was the formation of these societies, that encouraged Cecil Sharp to establish the English Folk Dance Society in London, in 1911 (Wolfram 1960; p. 251). These folk researchers compiled collections of folk song and dance, much of which was published in their own language and Sharp and others followed their example in England. Koudal (1993) has documented the history of research into folk music in Denmark, citing many researchers, studies and papers, but rarely have any of these been translated into English. Some of these collections, however, found their way into publications in the United States from the 1930s through to the 1950s (Kurath 1960), where there was much interest in immigrant backgrounds, evidenced by books such as *Dances from Old Homelands* (Burchenal 1933). In addition there was concern to make folklore available to the public (Kurath 1960) and folk dance became an important part of the educational curriculum in many parts of the United States and elsewhere, and remained so in many areas up until the 1970s. As a consequence of this, a large number and range of dance manuals and teaching aids were published both for the education sector, and to aid the pursuit and enjoyment of recreational dancing.

Within school education in the US and UK, in the period between the 1920s and the 1960s, folk dance was considered an important part of the curriculum as it was thought to aid in the moulding of well-rounded individuals, and many publications were produced describing the folk dances of particular countries, in order to assist teachers. *Gymnastic and Folk Dances* (Hinman 1930), for example, describes, and gives instructions and music to several Swedish dances. Anne Duggan, was a prolific writer on folk dance in the 1940s and 50s, and helped to compile the eight volumes of the Folk Dance library, in particular Volume 5, *Folk dances of*

*Scandinavia*, (Duggan, Schlottman, and Rutledge 1948), which included historic and geographic background, and dance instructions and music. *Dances of Norway* (Semb 1951), was aimed mainly at recreational dancers and included dance instructions and descriptions, and historic background material and music. Detailed and technical works were also published for an American readership, such as *Glad i att dansa!* (translated to Happy to be Dancing, Gooch 1948) which is a collection of over 100 Swedish dances with regional geographic and historic details, and is still considered an important work to Swedish folk dance teachers. It is also possible that there is a wealth of more recent unpublished material in English, held in academic institutions in the United States that would be of relevance to this study, such as for example, Jordan-Smith's doctoral study of Contra Dance and English Country Dance events in Seattle (Jordan-Smith 2000). In this study, dance events in Contra Dance and English Country Dance, are compared with those of Scandinavian folk dance, in order to understand participation, through an examination of the structuring of these activities and communicative characteristics, according to established academic precepts.

Literature about folk dance published more recently in Scandinavia is also often not translated into English, and the majority of this research is papers and articles rather than books and large-scale studies. The range of literature that has been translated appears to follow the recent trends in academic work in the study of dance noted earlier, and is concerned with exploring the social, cultural, and political aspects of music and dance. An indication of this is given in an edited volume of papers from a conference, held in 2003, about the considerable Polish influences on Scandinavian folk dance, which was published in English (Ramsten 2003). This volume includes twelve papers, covering a wide range of methodologies and disciplines, based on music analysis, research in social-cultural history, and studies from social and cultural geography. Papers on nationalism and nationhood have also been translated and published in English. *Being Norwegian* (Eriksen 1993), examines the use of Norwegian Folk dance in the construction and maintenance of a Norwegian national identity and a tourist industry. *Staging "Sweden"* (Vail 2003), discusses the performative aspects of Swedish folk dance as a political statement, and its use in a culturally constructed image of Sweden. Clinical and medical research has also taken an interest in Swedish folk dance as a basis for assessing the benefits of

participation in folk dancing. A study by Wigaeus and Kilbom (1980), was translated into English and assessed the aerobic advantages of participating in the Swedish Hambo dance by healthy individuals in their late 20s, as a form of exercise training for physical fitness. This study illustrates a common link in recent studies, which have looked at music and dance in relation to health and wellbeing, and this is a topic of interest in this research.

### Music, Dance, Health and Wellbeing

A further dimension of this thesis, concerns issues associated with health and wellbeing, as this is the overall benefit of participation reported by those involved, and a number of studies have explored the beneficial effects of music and dance. The majority of research into the benefits of music to health have been conducted within a clinical environment, although several studies outside this context have looked at the beneficial short-term effects of music on wellbeing and health (Standley 1995; Pelletier 2004; Henser 2010). In spite of this, the actual mechanisms involved in producing these benefits have remained elusive. There is a growing body of research that indicates that music is unique in its ability to manage and regulate emotions and stress, and that emotions play a vital role in this mechanism (Sloboda 2010; De Nora 2010; Västfjäll et al 2012). However, because most studies have been conducted in artificial environments it is uncertain whether these positive results would be duplicated in real life situations and research into the long-term benefits of music have only begun within the last two decades. A related study outside the clinical environment, looked into the perceived benefits of involvement in amateur choral singing (Clift and Hancox 2001), and concluded that there is a need for further research into the positive effects of involvement in musical activity to wellbeing. This research into folk music and social dance goes some way to address this need.

Studies have linked the engagement in physical activity with a reduction in the risk of physical illnesses and mental disorders (Landers 1997; Fox 1999; Warburton et al 2006). Further research has shown the positive results of physical activity in relation to physical functions such as gait, balance, elasticity, muscle strength, and joint mobility coordination (Flores 1995; Piedro et al 2002; Hanna 2006; Verghese et al

2006). It has been suggested that through history, as well as being a means of human expression, the potential for dance to influence health has also been one of its primary functions (Levy 1992; p.15). In addition, Arcangeli's research into Middle Ages and Renaissance texts, suggests that dance was regarded as a balanced form of exercise in pre-modern European societies, promoting a healthy body and mind because it encouraged periods of rest and movement (Arcangeli 2000). A study by Quiroga et al. (2010) concluded that dancing is perceived of as having a wide range of positive benefits associated with improved self-esteem and coping strategies, as well as in emotional, physical, social, and in spiritual dimensions. Further evidence from research using neuroimaging techniques has shown how music has beneficial effects on cognitive processes (Pantev et al 2003; Fukui and Toyoshima 2008), and other studies suggest that dance may improve functions such as attention, concentration, memory and perception, as well as time and spacetial representation, and creativity (Berrol et al 1997; Verghese et al 2003; Hanna 2008). Of relevance to the participants that are the subject of this thesis, physical activity also has proven benefits to individuals as they get older, and much work has been done to promote this as a lifestyle choice (Brawley et al 2003; Buchner 2003; Stickley et al. 2014). Clinical research has shown that for the elderly, taking part in social dance is a healthy activity both mentally and physically, and may even mitigate the onset of preclinical dementia (Verghese 2003, 2006; Judge 2003). As was the case with music, however, few studies have been undertaken outside the clinical environment, recent work by Skinner (2009) goes some way to support the clinical research in these studies through case studies in three locations internationally. The scholarly works cited, indicate some of the ways in which the beneficial effects of dance has been investigated and describes their conclusions, and this plays a part in the validation of health and wellbeing as the focus of the interpretive account in this thesis

Outside of a clinical context, the notion of wellbeing is complex and can have multiple meanings, generally based on ideas to do with the benefits to the individual of being engaged in meaningful activity (Borges da Costa 2012). Recent work in the field has looked beyond considering wellbeing as an absence of dis-ease, which is how it has been conceptualised for many years, to treat wellbeing in a more positive light. This is based on the idea that to achieve a sense of wellbeing, individuals

should 'actively make use of their physical, mental, and social capacities to enjoy wellbeing naturally and link this with their social needs for belonging' (Wilcock 2006; p. 315). Although the principle and concept of subjective wellbeing has been established, it may take several years for an agreed definition and criteria to become recognized. In 1989, for example, Ryff suggested that self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth, were all defining factors in assessing wellbeing. Ryan and Deci (2001), however, suggested the three criteria of autonomy, competence and relatedness, as criteria for the experience of wellbeing, by using the theoretical framework of self-determination theory. However, most recent studies recognise the need to include a combination of hedonic and eudaimonic components in their assessment of wellbeing; that is a combination of positive feeling, and successful functioning. The acronym PERMA represents a definition of subjective wellbeing by Seligman, which he suggests is based on positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman 2011). In a study conducted at the University of Cambridge, England, researchers coined the term 'flourishing' to describe the combination of high levels of subjective wellbeing, when paired with economic indicators, in order to give an assessment of the health of a country (Huppert and So 2011). In this study, ten indices were proposed by which to measure wellbeing, by looking at the opposites of the agreed criteria for measuring depression. These criteria were listed as competence, emotional stability, engagement, meaning, optimism, positive emotion, positive relationships, resilience, self-esteem, and vitality (ibid.), and this study proposes that each of these can be measured through psychometric analysis. This is only a small sample of the many ways in which attempts have been made to define wellbeing, and find ways to measure it.

In 2008, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) produced a report based on data from 40,000 people, in which it presented a National Account of Well-Being for 22 countries in Europe (Murphy 2008). It argued that 'national governments should directly measure people's subjective well-being: their experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their lives are going' (ibid.; p. 2) and that this measurement should be used in addition to economic data in order to assess the health of a country. It further called for a re-evaluation of our notion of a national accounting

system for wellbeing and 'what we should collectively value, and hence what we should measure' (ibid.; p. 8). It therefore gives the following seven criteria for the assessment of personal and social wellbeing:

#### Personal wellbeing

- Emotional well-being (*Positive feelings and Absence of Negative feelings*)
- Satisfying life
- Vitality
- Resilience and self-esteem (*Self-esteem, Optimism, Resilience*)
- Positive functioning (*Autonomy, Competence, Engagement, Meaning and Purpose*)

#### Social wellbeing

- Supportive relationships
- Trust and belonging  
(Murphy 2008; p. 21)

These criteria have been formulated by condensing the work of many studies such as those quoted above, and can be used for an assessment of the sense of wellbeing that comes about through involvement in these folk music and social dance activities. The conditions set out in the NEF report are therefore used as the basis for part of the discussion of wellbeing in the final chapter of this thesis.

#### Theoretical works

The literature discussed above reflects much of the academic discourse around folk activities and suggests the influences and current attitudes to the practices of folk music and folk dance, and specifically to the two dance styles taken as case studies. It also looked at some of the studies that have been carried out that link music, dance, health and wellbeing in order to position this thesis in relation to the body of work on these subjects. However, a number of theoretical positions inform the approach taken in this thesis, and a discussion of these follows, beginning by

considering how the idea of wellbeing has been conceptualised in the past, before moving on to other theoretical considerations that have a bearing on this study.

### The Notion of wellbeing

As was indicated in the above brief survey of studies, there is no single, clear definition of 'wellbeing', and perspectives differ between disciplines, as they tend to conceptualised the notion in somewhat different ways. The term is therefore often used interchangeably with other terms and expressions such as wellness, happiness, flourishing, 'having a good life', life satisfaction, physical and emotional welfare, and quality of life, all of which carry underlying meanings and emphases. There is as a result a lack of agreement as to how to assess wellbeing, and so different studies have measured it in different ways and used different variables.

Economic indicators such as income and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have been related to happiness, however, it has been shown that this relationship is dependent on income relative to that of others, and that therefore, raising the income of all does not increase an overall sense of happiness (Easterlin 1995). It has been found that indicators such as income and GDP, do not adequately reflect happiness, and therefore there have been moves to incorporate both objective and subjective criteria in the assessment of wellbeing. Layard, for example, called for quantitative data to be collected about how citizens perceive how their life is going and whether they are experiencing a 'good life', in order to indicate levels of happiness and to assess subjective wellbeing (Layard 2005). This was also reflected in a poll taken in the UK, in 2009, which found that 81 percent of people supported the idea that the prime objective of the government should be the 'greatest happiness' of its citizens rather than the 'greatest wealth' (Murphy 2008).

Research into subjective wellbeing has its origins in the 1960s (Wilson 1967), where the term was used relatively interchangeably with happiness. However, by the 1980s it had been established that subjective wellbeing involves more than emotions or passing moods, and rather than being considered as a single construct (happiness), it should be regarded as a more general area of scientific interest (Diener et al 1999). The study of subjective wellbeing recognises that quantitatively assessed measures may not be enough and that 'social indicators alone do not define quality of life' (ibid: p. 277). Research that focuses on what makes life

pleasurable and makes people feel good is classified as taking the hedonic approach. This approach is based on the persons own perceptions of what will make life better, rather than an objective assessment of what others think should make life better. However, what a person may think should make them happy may not always bring happiness. In other disciplines, many studies have followed this hedonic approach, while others have taken a eudaimonic approach, where wellbeing is judged in terms of a meaningful life.

Aristotle considered what it is to 'live a good life', in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he offered accounts of human happiness and welfare, concluding that a good life should be based on activity expressing virtue (Aristotle 1985). This can be recognised as at the root of a eudaimonic approach to wellbeing, which requires individuals to live according to their true self in order to fulfil their own potential. This approach assumes a subjective idea of perfection that provides the individual with meaning and direction in their lives (Ryff and Singer 2008). Rather than a focus on happiness or pleasure, this approach concentrates on meaning and self-realisation, describing wellbeing in terms of how well a person is fully functioning. Waterman (1993), for example, suggests that eudaimonic wellbeing is achieved when a person's lived life, matches their deeply held values, and when they are fully engaged. Another perspective on the eudaimonic approach to wellbeing is taken in self-determination theory, which works on the premise that humans have innate psychological needs that should be developed through self-actualisation (Ryan and Deci 2002). However, it has also been suggested that choosing how to act to satisfy one's needs can be undermined by context or environment, giving negative feedback, and that this approach often denies plasticity in an individual's value system (Ryan and Deci 2001).

Psychological and sociological researchers, have used these hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives within their disciplines, and have included context as an additional factor in there approached to the topic of wellbeing. Psychological research has advanced this area of study by searching for a psychological meaning of wellbeing, and has been concerned with, for example, interpersonal relationships and difference, the role of the emotions, and physical and mental health. For instance, Diener and Lucas (1999), looked into personality traits associated with extraversion and neuroticism as factors in subjective wellbeing. Research in positive



psychology, however, suggests that by concentrating on feelings and functions, both hedonic and eudaimonic viewpoints under-theorise wellbeing, by not paying attention to social context' (McLellan et al 2012: p. 24). Sociological research has highlighted the need to consider social context and social relationships, as well as the individual. While it has been claimed that self-determination theory mentioned above, is an 'organismic-dialectical metatheory' (Ryan and Deci, 2002: p. 27), and is concerned with the individual's interaction with their environment, the focal point is the individual rather than their social context. A study by Keyes, however, highlighted the importance of belonging, participation and the perception of others (Keyes 1998), while another study, theorises work as either personally chosen or work that is done out of necessity, and considers our attitudes to work as a major contributory factor to wellbeing (White 2011). National surveys of wellbeing reveal that interaction with others and the strength of these relationships are reported as being two of the most important factors in assessments of a 'good life' (Murphy 2008), however, it is recognised that many other factors also come into play.

While the above constitutes a broad review and problematisation of the concept of wellbeing, it is by no means an exhaustive account, and many other areas of scholarship have something to contribute to the debate concerning the discussion of wellbeing. Work in Developmental studies, a multidisciplinary branch of social science, for example, has pointed to the basic entitlements for being human as the focus for assessing wellbeing (Bevan 2007). Other themes have concerned whether wellbeing is different across time or place, or in different developmental periods (Atkinson 2012; Wight 2012), topics that have been of interest in the field of anthropology.

Anthropology and Ethnography also have much to contribute to the discussion of wellbeing, and while few studies approached this topic directly, many have discussed wellbeing in a variety of cultural contexts. Indeed one area in which the works that have focussed on hedonic and eudaimonic approaches have been lacking, is in that they do not examine how wellbeing is conceived differently in different social and cultural settings. Ethnographic studies however, are able to make comparisons, not for example based only on statistics placed side by side, but on the nuances of the sociocultural context. For example, Harper and Madox (2008) have studied the relationships of human agency and control to wellbeing in Nepal,

and Jankowiak (2010) has looked at social change and personal growth in China. The interest of Laidlaw (2010) was in the overlap of wellbeing and nonviolence in diasporic Jain communities, and Izquierdo (2010) in trading communities among the Matsigenka of the Peruvian Amazon. DeNora (2014) has written about wellbeing and wellness, and mental health, in the south of England, and Wisner (2010) schemes for ensuring the wellbeing for children with disabilities in the United States. Fischer (2014) makes a comparison between German supermarket consumers and Guatemalan coffee producers, asking what it means to have a 'good life'. Common to all ethnographic research, however, these studies can only provide an interpretive account of wellbeing within a particular context. Nevertheless, the strength of these studies is that they have been able to describe and examine the state or 'condition' of wellbeing, and the means by which it may be attained or the barriers to its attainment, in many different cultural contexts and social settings. The comparison of wellbeing within and across cultures and societies is a relatively new but important area for ethnographic inquiry, and hopes to uncover a shared meaning for wellbeing and how to achieve it. The work in this thesis adds to this body of knowledge and makes a contribution through a study of a particular social setting where participants discuss the benefits of their involvement in the terms that are common to other literature that describes wellbeing.

### Social Settings

Further scholarly literature is also relevant to the social settings studied in this research, in particular that about the social structures that enable an environment where wellbeing can be supported. In the following section, some of the theoretical works that has been useful in interpreting this ethnographic account of folk music and social dance will be discussed.

In the brief description of these practices at the beginning of this chapter, it was indicated that attending folk social dance events involves a level of participation in the event beyond taking part in only the music and dance. Often the feeling of common association and camaraderie creates an atmosphere of informality and security, which breaks down social barriers that may inhibit participants in other circumstances. It is enthusiasm for the music and dance that motivates the

organisers, who work towards 'breaking even' financially, rather than aiming to make a profit for themselves. In addition, events are mostly structured in such a way as to foster an experience similar to what anthropologist Victor Turner describes as *communitas* (Turner 1969). The feelings generated through this style of organisation are 'giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society' (Turner 1969; p. 83), which is confirmed and symbolically communicated by a variety of ritualised public behaviours. This experience is perhaps also supported by the special forms of relationships that develop between individuals because of cooperation around a collective interest, and participation in, and practice of any art form. The ways these activities are organised and the webs of loose relationships that are created are described by Howard Becker as 'Art Worlds'; where people are bonded together not only through participation in the practice of an art form in which they have a common interest, but also through the processes of organisation around that participation. Becker gives the example of that which 'might occur in a simple communally shared art form like the square dance' (Becker 2002; p. 178). The events and activities that are participated in based on a particular dance style, could also be described as taking place within such art worlds. Ruth Finnegan also found the idea of 'Art Worlds' useful in her description of the musical worlds of Milton Keynes (Finnegan 1989), and there is much in common between the practices that she describes, and the practices of the dance styles that are the subject of this research. Both Finnegan's research and this study, examine the musical practices that people participate in as a hobby, which could therefore be termed amateur, a problematic term which Finnegan also discusses (Finnegan 1989; pp. 12-19). Such practices, while they may be performed in public, are not readily visible within the wider commercially driven society. These worlds have flexible and porous boundaries, allowing individuals to be involved in several worlds, consecutively or even simultaneously. Finnegan therefore rejects the concept of 'Art Worlds', suggesting that participants do not inhabit such boundaried and confined worlds, but use them as 'pathways in urban living' (ibid; pp. 12-18), and as routes to social interaction and identity, and the expression of individual and collective values.

Other writers have chosen to use different approaches, reflected in the different terms they use to describe similar social settings to those of interest to this thesis.

Sara Cohen for example espouses the use of the term 'scene', which some writers have chosen to use (cf. Straw 2004,1991; Webb 2007; Brill 2007; Stahl 2008; Kruse, 2003), rather than other terms that imply groups that are bounded and geographically rooted such as the terms world, community or subculture (Cohen 1999). She defines scenes as referring to 'groups of people and organisations, situations and events involved with the production and consumption of particular music genre and styles' (ibid; p. 239). This also serves as a description that could be applied to the events and activities under consideration here, and scene is a term that is sometimes used by participants in reference to these events and activities; it is this later consideration which therefore led me to use this term in the early stages of this study.

'Scene' can be a useful concept to use in the description of these types of events and activities, and initial impressions are that it is appropriate in this context. Peterson and Bennett recognise that all scenes, while being specific to a particular music genre or style, are also unique, and that it can be useful to identify a number of distinguishing characteristics that some scenes have in common with others, and they suggest the categories, local, translocal and virtual (Peterson and Bennett 2004). Local scenes are physically and geographically located. Translocal scenes bring together widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around their distinctive form of music and lifestyle. Festivals and the types of events described here in connection with the different dance styles could be described as translocal scenes. Virtual scenes are Internet based and have no physical location. In most cases, it is difficult to describe any particular scene as belonging to any one of these categories, as many scenes show characteristics of more than one of these types of scene.

One striking factor in the study of scenes in the past is that they have overwhelmingly been focussed on youth scenes (Bennett 1999, 2003; Sellars 1998; Winstock et al 2001; Gottlieb, Wald 1994; Straw 1991). This could be for many reasons, for example, youth scenes are easy to locate, mostly being of a high profile, and often very evident, and therefore they suggest themselves more readily. Commercial concerns also put much weight behind marketing aimed at youth, encouraging social perceptions of youth being musical, dynamic, and creative, to the extent that much of the media and advertising in particular, fetishizes youth and

youthfulness. All of these influences may have an impact on the direction of such social research. However, this may underestimate the differing priorities of different age groups and changing social factors, such as the demographics of the UK, increased economic status and better health in older age groups. While studies have commented on older scene participants (Andes 1998; Weinstein 2000; MacDonald-Walker 1998; Calcutt 1998; Ross 1994), it is only recently that some studies have focused on aspects of non-youth participation in musical activities (Bennett 2006; Vroomen 2004; Smith 2006, 2009; Hodkinson 2010, 2011). A very clear feature of the folk music and social dance scenes of this study, however, is that the majority of participants are within a range of 30 and 70 years of age, with approximately equal numbers of participants younger and older than this. If these activities are to be viewed as scenes, this may be a very important characteristic of those who take part in folk music and social dance, and an important influence on how these scenes operate. Investigating these scenes may tell us something about these issues; how participants perceive the not-for-profit approach of these scenes for example, and more broadly, whether there is an interaction and a dynamic between age and commerce in the formation of scenes.

Although the term 'scene' is one that is used here, it cannot be assumed that the term has the same meaning or value to the participants in folk music and social dance, as that defined and used by Cohen and others. It may be useful at this point therefore, to refine the notion of scene and to place the term in a much wider context. The idea of 'Musicking' as defined by Christopher Small (1998) provides a valuable theoretical tool with respect to this. Small argues that music is not a thing, but an activity; something that people do, and he has put forward a theory of 'Musicking', as a word that he defines as the verb, to music (Small 1998).

Participants in these folk music and social dance scenes are essentially Musicking, which Small defines as taking part 'in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing' (ibid: p. 9).

There is therefore no distinction between what the performers are doing and what the rest of those involved are doing. Beyond this, musicking is also to do with where these events are located physically, temporally and socially, through factors such as the building and its environs, the audience, the management of the event and

employment of staff, the composition process, the musicians' rehearsal, and practice, and so on. The notion of scene that takes this view, however, widens the scope of participation beyond a sense of common association and camaraderie described above, and questions the usefulness of the idea. This is because, other than the music and dance participants themselves, the involvement and interests of other people is generally focussed on commercial considerations, and not on a particular music genre or style.

## Chapter Structure

To conclude this introduction, I shall briefly set out the progression of this thesis by explaining the five chapters that make up the main body of this dissertation, and this exploration of these music based activities. The methodology applied in this research was effective in uncovering the issues that were of importance to the meaning and significance of folk social dance to those involved. The findings of this research revealed a wealth of beneficial outcomes as a result of taking part in folk social dance that indicated positive effects on their individual wellbeing, and this has determined the course of the thesis. The ethnographic methodology that has been adopted for this research is explained in detail in Chapter 1, which highlights the specific methods used in this research, their limitations and ethical implications, the perspectives taken and the reporting style that has been used. A particular emphasis is placed on empowering those involved in the study, such that they can effect and shape the detail of this research, and influence the focus of the study. In Chapter 2, using the testimony of participants, the background to Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance styles in the UK is discussed in order to establish the context and extent of present day participation. It concludes that involvement is organised in a manner that is an extension to the participatory nature of the social dance practices, and in such a way that is sustainable and affordable. Having described the setting for this research, in Chapter 3 the focus is on the nature of current practice in the UK, the extent to which these two styles are influenced by practices in their place of origin, and how influences from a wider environment are negotiated within these groups. These practices, which have been adopted in the UK, are derived from very different cultural and intellectual approaches and outlooks,

and these explain many of the differences between them, however, in the context of the UK, these practices have become very similar. Building on the discussion in the previous two chapters, in Chapter 4 participation in these two social settings is described and analysed, along with the ways in which practice is managed, such that it facilitates inclusiveness and acceptance and a sense of belonging. Participants explain their involvement in terms of the creation of a temporary community at each event, based on social cohesion through familiarity and generosity, within an unboundaried social network of participation. The sense of belonging is rooted in the various ways in which individuals experience participation, and in particular, the experience of dance in a social context, and this is the topic considered in Chapter 5. This is explored through considering a number of connections that participants make in this social setting and how these are regarded and described by participants. The benefits to participation that have been reported by those involved in these social settings, and those that have been discussed in each of the preceding chapters, are brought together in the final chapter. This point of convergence of these chapters addresses the research question, 'What is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?' In order to do so, this final chapter looks at the considerable contribution to the subjective wellbeing of those involved, which has been affirmed in the research into these folk social dance activities.

## Chapter 1

### **The Search for Meaning – Methodology, Perspectives, and Research Context**

‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning.’ (Geertz 1973; p. 5)

In the above quote, Clifford Geertz sketches some of the principles on which the study of ethnography is based, and it is in this way that I have approached this research into the practices of two styles of folk music and social dance. I have used ethnographic methodology in order to address the question, ‘What is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?’

This is an ethnographic study, in which my approach has been collaborative and humanistic, and grounded in the experiences of participants in these styles of dance. It has been an exercise in creating an interpretive account of these practices, which wishes to gain an insight into participation from those who take part, placing the experience of participation at the forefront of this interpretation. It therefore prioritises engagement through discourse and involvement, and ultimate respect for those who have contributed and more broadly, who participate in these two styles of folk music and social dance.

In this Chapter, I shall firstly look at ethnographic methodology itself, focussing on three important areas, participant observation, interviewing and reflective practice. I shall then use these three areas as the basis for a discussion of the specific methods used in this study, to describe, explain, and interpret the contemporary practices of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK. I shall



then detail the approach and perspectives taken in this study, along with an appraisal of their limitations and ethical implications, and finally I will discuss the influences on, and style of, reporting of the research.

### A Way of Looking - An Overview of Ethnographic Methodology

Ethnography is a set of qualitative research techniques that have been applied to a wide range of disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, but which have their origins in anthropology. Ethnography has been tied in with other qualitative and quantitative methods in a variety of areas of research, in particular, in what is termed Triangulation Research (cf. Morse 1991; Mangan et al. 2003; Flick 2004; Holland and Campbell 2005; Yoshikawa et al. 2008). Bronislaw Malinowski was instrumental in introducing and promoting ethnography as a research strategy in anthropology at the beginning of the twentieth century, in his studies of the Trobriand Islands (Malinowski 1922, 1935, 1948). Malinowski promoted this descriptive and interpretative methodology as a means 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world' (Malinowski 1922, p. 25, emphasis in original text) and his work has been highly influential in establishing the principals in the practice of ethnography. Ethnography has therefore been used by many anthropologists since, in a variety of studies and in a wide range of situations, where research has approached an understanding of culture through the observation and documentation of daily life (cf. Mead 1977; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Wolcott 1973, 1982; Ho 2009). Ethnographic studies have emphasised the primacy of the researcher spending large amounts of time gathering information within the context of the everyday lives of the people being studied, often referred to as participant observation. Participant observation has therefore become a key element in anthropological studies of culture using ethnographic research, whether these have been distant cultures such as the subject of Malinowski, Mead, and Evans-Pritchard, or nearer to our own, such as with Wolcott, and Ho (ibid.).

The topic of participant observation is one that has been much considered by writers on ethnographic methodology, and consequently there is a great deal of literature about participant observation in ethnographic research (Spradley 1980; Atkinson and

Hammersley 1994; Savage 2000; Madden 2010; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Much of the writing has been concerned with the various aspects and elements of this research methodology, and how they should be used and conceptualised. The context in which the participant observation is conducted, for example, is most commonly referred to as the field, and Burgess describes fields as 'circumscribed areas of study which have been the subject of social research' (Burgess 1984; p. 1). However, this definition is recognised as being problematic by writers such as Hine, for example, who questions the construction of boundaries around social settings and the implications of this view to ethnographic studies (Hine 2000). The difficulties related to the construction of such boundaries in this study will be discussed later in the Chapter. Participant observation is just one of the techniques used while working in the field, an activity referred to as fieldwork, which is therefore documented through field notes, a topic that has also been a subject of scrutiny. Field notes are part of the text produced as a result of ethnographic research, and are described in the simplest terms as 'observations and reflections concerning the field' (Atkinson 1990; p. 5). However, field notes have also been described as data 'accumulated, jealously preserved, duplicated, sent to an academic advisor, cross-referenced, and selectively forgotten or manipulated later on' (Clifford 1990; p. 63). A number of other writers have also discussed the many important uses and issues relating to field notes for ethnographers (Burgess 1984, 2002; Sanjeck 1990; Webb 1991; Barz 1997; O'Reilly 2005), and the specific approach to field notes taken in this research will be discussed in some detail later in this Chapter. The role of the researcher in participant observation has also been discussed by many writers (Gold 1958; Adams and Preiss 1960; Bryman and Burgess 1999; Gans 1999), however, despite its overbearing and gendered terms of expression, this role was described succinctly by Becker in 1958:

The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations, and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed. (Becker 1958; p. 652)

However, there has been some confusion about the use of the term participant observation itself, because it has been used in a number of ways. It has for example been used interchangeably with ethnography, or to refer to all of the activities a researcher is involved with in the field (Wolcott 2008). Spradley, uses the term to refer to a general approach to fieldwork (Spradley 1980), while Agar uses it as a term to cover interviewing, whether formal or informal, and the observational work that an ethnographer engages in (Agar 1986). The use of participant observation is most commonly paired up with interviewing, which is the other major activity of fieldwork conducted by ethnographers. The information gained from interviews is therefore used to enrich that which is gathered through participant observation, and the two techniques are considered complementary.

The use of interviews is important in most types of social research including ethnography, and consequently there is a vast literature concerning all aspects of their practice (Patton 1990; Gubrium and Holstein 2001; Berg 2004). Like participant observation, ethnographic interviewing has also been written about in considerable depth (Spradley 1979; Burgess 2002; Russell 2011) and, as discussed earlier, in some studies interviewing overlaps with participant observation. Informal, conversational interviews are the most common interview methods in ethnography, such that in some social research literature, they are referred to as ethnographic interviews (Patton 1990). Other methods commonly used in ethnography, include the use of an interview guide, where a researcher approaches the interview with a prepared checklist of themes and subjects to be explored, and open-ended interviews where the researcher has a scripted set of open questions. Interviews may also use any combination of these methods and others depending on the circumstances and how much knowledge the researcher has of the cultural situation under study. Spradley points out that ethnographic interviews share many of the characteristics of friendly conversation, but they differ by having explicit purpose, and because of their use of specific ethnographic explanations and questions (Spradley 1979; p. 59). He identifies a taxonomy of more than 30 types of ethnographic questions belonging to three main groups as determined by their purpose (*ibid.* p. 223). The general aim of the ethnographic interview, however, Spradley states, is to 'get inside the heads' of the people being interviewed (*ibid.* p. 8) and to put across; 'I

want to know what you know in the way that you know it' (ibid. p. 34). The researcher therefore has to build a rapport with the interviewee, focussing on the meanings interviewees place on their experience and circumstances, while developing a respectful on-going relationship (Heyl 2001). However, there is also a need for careful consideration of how interviewees are chosen, as this also influences what information is acquired (Cohen 2000).

While fieldwork through participant observation and interviews may be the main techniques used in ethnographic methodology, the emphasis on each varies between studies, and documentary evidence may also be used to support these types of research. This has been illustrated through the many different ways in which ethnography has been used in studies of popular music as a cultural activity. In some of these ethnographic studies, the emphasis has been in repeated participant observation in one place over a long period of time (Cohen 1991; Shank 1993; Taylor 2003), while others utilise in-depth interviews and observations, which are not repeated, regular, or in one locality (Cavicchi 1998; DeNora 2000). Many have also made use of documentation in supporting participant observation and interviews (Finnagan 1989; Cavicchi 1998), while Craft et al (1993), used interviews alone to document the diverse ways in which music is important in people's lives.

The final area of ethnographic methodology that I wish to discuss is reflective practice, an essential part of all aspects of this methodology, and often neglected in discussions of the 'nuts and bolts' of the practice of ethnography. Reflective practice was first discussed as a helpful disposition in the work of professionals by Donald Schön, in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983), although it has its foundation in earlier work on learning theory that focuses on the integration of theory and practice, experience and reflection (cf. Dewey 1902; Lewin 1942; Smith 1993). Reflective practice is therefore the facility to reflect on action, and by so doing to employ a process of continuous learning (Schön 1983), and has been adopted in a number of social and person-centred professions. It involves careful thought, an intelligent self-awareness or mindfulness and understanding of one's actions and interpretations, and in particular the reconsidering of one's previous actions or decisions. For example, in ethnographic research, through the process of reflection, the researcher becomes aware of 'the principles by which they select some

situations, events and people, but reject others while working in the field' (Burgess 1984; p. 53). Awareness such as this in any social research is extremely valuable in producing a well-rounded and balanced explanation of a social setting. Engaging in reflective practice requires the researcher to take up the position of an external observer, in order to identify the assumptions and feelings that are behind how they go about their research, and then to consider how these effect practice in order to extract a level of meaning from the experience (Osterman 1990). Schön also identifies two kinds of reflection, reflection on action, and reflection in action (Schön 1988). Reflection on action takes place after an activity, such as when the ethnographer contemplates their own relationships with the people in the study. Reflection in action, however, takes place during an activity, for example, where the ethnographer tempers his or her own actions or reactions, in order not to influence a situation during fieldwork.

Engagement with reflective practice injects a measure of self-awareness into the research, and this can be beneficial, even from the earliest point of considering the formulation of the research question itself. All research starts with the purpose of answering a research question, which in ethnography does not originate in the social setting itself, but has its origins outside of it. For the majority of those involved in the setting therefore, the research question may well be a rhetorical one (Wolcott 1999; p. 69). The research question is therefore a question *of* the setting rather than a question about the setting, and reflective practice equips the ethnographer with the means to appreciate, and to try to understand the rationale behind the external perspective of the questioner. Engagement with reflective practice is therefore essential to a well-rounded exploration and interpretation of the social activities under investigation, and influences all aspects of ethnographic investigation. It engages the ethnographic researcher with their knowledge of the specific ethnographic methods used, enables them to question and become aware of their professional and personal philosophy, and draws attention to the ethics related to social research that determine the rules and techniques that constitute good practice. Reflective practice is therefore a principle that has been given prominence, and which has been built into the methodology of this research. The reporting of such investigation is also critically influenced by reflection on the relationship of the

researcher to the researched, and how they might be represented, and this will be discussed further in a subsequent section concerning the reporting of this research project.

Ethnography is therefore an empirical research method that has its applications in many areas of research that question our understanding of cultural activity, such as what we *do* with music, and is a very particular way of looking at this. It is based on maintaining a reflective and mindful stance in the analysis of descriptive data derived from first-hand experience, largely through getting involved in a social setting, and interaction with others who may be already involved is used to help make sense of this. Wolcott argues that 'All humans do what ethnographers do, only on a more modest scale, and for personal rather than professional reasons' (Wolcott 1999; p. 42) and he goes on to agree with Spradley, stating that it is a professional sense of purpose that is distinctive of ethnography (Spradley 1979). Wolcott adds that further, 'ethnography is more than a method; it is a way of conceptualising as well as a way of looking' (Wolcott 1999; p. 42). Other writers support the claim that the adoption of an ethnographic methodology involves a very particular perspective about how to study culture (Geertz 1975; Anders and Machin 2013). Machin suggests 'The most important part of doing ethnography, is that the ethnographer has to take a view of people's behaviour as being determined largely by the culture in which they live, through which they acquire a repertoire of tools for making sense of the world and themselves' (Machin, 2002; pp. 1-2). This very particular way of looking at the world, people, and culture, has also been termed 'the ethnographic gaze' (Madden 2010; p. 99). Within this, however, each ethnographic researcher's approach may be significantly different; the specifics of this researcher's 'ethnographic gaze' will be discussed in detail when explaining the methods and perspective taken in this study.

### The Ethnographic Gaze Turned On Itself

In undertaking this study I was very aware that ethnography has not been without its critics and has been the subject of scrutiny by a number of writers who have examined the idea of ethnography as a methodology that can interpret culture in any meaningful way (Cohen 1993; O'Reilly 2005). Debates have, for example, looked

closely at the value of ethnographic techniques from the perspective of epistemology (Clifford 1986; Bourdieu 1990; Van Maanen 1995; Titon 2003). Critiques of early studies have drawn attention to them being very strongly influenced by the cultural values of the researcher at that time, and have in particular pointed out the colonialist influence on many of these works. Writers have questioned the ability of anthropology and ethnography to know, understand, speak on behalf of, or represent people, from the type of culturally distanced and partial perspective intrinsic to asking questions *of* a culture. Spradley draws attention to this when he states that 'ethnography is a culture - studying culture' (Spradley 1979; p. 9). It has also been suggested that ethnography creates a type of fiction because ethnographies produce 'partial truths', as they are incomplete, biased, and in many respects the result of an ethnographer's interpretation and to some extent imagination (Clifford 1986; p. 7). Atkinson also discusses the texts produced in ethnography as constructions contingent on the researcher's imagination (Atkinson 1990). Titon, however, suggests that ethnographic accounts do not need to be dominated by the voice of the author, and therefore by a single interpretation, and argues that it is possible to include a variety of interpretations. He therefore suggests that by so doing an ethnographic account can become "multivoiced" (Titon, 2003; p. 176). However, these interpretations inevitably involve selection in some form, and Hastrup points out that 'gender studies have taught us that the general pretence of neutrality must be abandoned. There is no way to eliminate our consciousness from our activities in the field; it is part of reality' (Hastrup 1992; p. 118).

The types of introspection that result in such debate, highlight the importance of reflective practice, and demonstrate the strength and efficacy of its application in ethnographic methodology. Both Geertz (1983) and Wolcott take this understanding further, Wolcott, through using the reflexive argument, stating that looking at;

our underlying beliefs about how properly to enact the research role, can help us realise that we do not have to go far afield to find culture at work; we need but take a closer look at how we ourselves believe we should go about the work of locating culture. (Wolcott 1999; p. 50)

These debates are helpful in establishing the rigour of ethnography; however, it is not possible to discuss these debates in greater depth in this thesis.

While the above serves as a useful overview of ethnographic methodology, ethnographic research in practice is not so straightforward and can be more complex. As has been suggested above, ethnographic practice allows considerable flexibility in approach, and because of this, one of its strengths is its application to a wide variety of settings. However, the boundaries constructed, and the typologies that have been devised, such as those that describe the role of the researcher in the field, methods of interview, or field documentation, for example, can only serve as a guide before research practice is undertaken, or as I have done here as an aid to explaining ethnographic methodology more generally. When it comes to practice itself, research activities do not always fit neatly into such boxes, as boundaries and lines between typologies become blurred, and attempts to do research under such strict parameters reduce ethnography's inherent flexibility and can be detrimental to a study. Much of the practice of ethnographic research involves the researcher responding to a set of unique circumstances and having to decide on the approach to a specific setting. In these situations, the openness and awareness which reflective practice brings, aids the researcher in maintaining the rigour and discipline necessary for the research. Wolcott recognises these problems and suggests that such concerns can be addressed and that flexibility can be maintained, but that in each study researchers should describe in more detail than is prompted by such phrases as *participant observation*, exactly what their method involved (Wolcott 1999; p. 45). The following section therefore, is intended to provide just such a detailed account of the process and methods used in this study, while reflecting on the decisions made, beginning with the relationship between the subject of the research and my position as researcher in the field.

### Methods and Perspectives – The ethnography used in this study

Having given some background to ethnographic methodology, and the techniques that are employed for gathering information, in the following section, I shall discuss and contextualise the specific methods used in this study. This will begin with an examination of biographic considerations that have informed the study, through the approach taken and the perspectives adopted. I will then move on to discuss the



nature of participant observation and field work that I have undertaken, highlighting the choices made and the rationale behind them. A similar approach will then be taken to explain the methods used in interviewing, and the techniques and influences that determined the interview process. Reflective practice has a strong influence and is imbued throughout this section, in particular within the description of the research context that informs this study, and which I now go on to consider.

i) Curiosity and the Dance – background to the research

As a researcher into folk music and social dance, I cannot claim to have been a stranger to events that would broadly come under this banner, and this research evolved out of my involvement in this over the previous ten years. Originally, I became interested in these activities through ‘happenstance’, when, as a curious musician looking for a new challenge and opportunities to play, I attended an event in Lancaster of which I had little prior knowledge. This was, I was told, a Euro dance event; however, the music provided by the live band was not familiar to me and was difficult to pigeonhole. The band were playing a mixture of folk and modern instruments, the music was lively and certainly produced an enthusiastic response from those present, the majority of whom were comfortably involved in various couple and chain dances; all of which I found quite appealing. I later discovered that this is a style of folk social dance often referred to as European folk social dance, or Euro dance, and involves dances originally from many countries in Central Europe, and in particular dances from Central France and Brittany, where large festivals are held regularly. After a brief and moderately successful dalliance with dancing, I began to learn tunes, attend workshops, networking with musicians, and eventually became part of a band playing for dance. At this point, a number of interesting things occurred to me. I had never played for social dance before and I began to appreciate the very particular way that I needed to perform in doing so, and to notice the complex interactions that take place between musicians and dancers. I resolved therefore to learn how to dance, in order to better understand the music and this interaction, and so improve my playing for dance. In addition, playing in a band provided me with frequent opportunities to watch what was taking place on and around the dance floor, and becoming increasingly involved in these social groups, I began to notice and became curious about this unique social environment. One

venue where Euro dance events were held regularly was a fortified Tudor house on the Welsh borders, and, in 2009, I conducted a short ethnographic study of these events (Kiddy 2009). In many ways, this was unwittingly the pilot for this study of practices in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk social dance, because as with all good research it left many questions about folk music and social dance unanswered, some of which have formed the basis for this enquiry.

Several years before starting this research, my involvement in Euro dance alerted me to similar events and activities based on a number of other social dance styles. Some of these, salsa and ceroc, for example, are generally very commercial, attract large numbers of participants, and hold large national annual events. The majority of dance styles, however, are more modestly organised and while they also hold national events, they have a relatively small following. Importantly, many of these smaller groups dance to live music, and are associated with a folk tradition. As with other leisure pastimes and popular hobbies, from wine making to train spotting, and Dungeons and Dragons to Live Action Role Play; these activities can be highly organised and have national appeal, but are generally based on an informal network of loose relationships and casual organisation. My knowledge of most of these dance events was limited to what I had heard from other Euro dance participants, and a few rare experiences of dances, such as Argentinean Tango, Klezmer and Contra dance, that had occasionally been scheduled at these Euro dance events, but were practiced regularly by other groups. It is therefore through my involvement in Euro dance that my attention was drawn to the styles of dance that later became the focus of this study.

The experience of folk music and social dance in particular, as I expanded my participation, informed the construction of the research question that is the focus of this study. My involvement and observations had led me to understand that these types of social folk dancing are popular throughout the UK, often with localised pockets of participants creating sociable groups, whose nucleus is most often an especially enthusiastic individual. Events may attract as few as 20 people, but often festivals in some dance styles, will average between 70 and 100 participants. However, these events are also fully participatory, because although a dancer may take a break and stand on the periphery of the dance floor watching the dancers and

musicians, they do not constitute an audience. Everyone who attends these events does so to take part, as dancers or musicians, and sometimes as both. What is also apparent is that most of the many and varied dance styles practiced at these events, originate from other countries, and have been adopted in the UK. In my wider social circles, an acquaintance questioned why these particular dance styles had been selected when English folk music and dance appear to be neglected or ignored. My research question was formulated to ask, what is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?

Having chosen a very broad research question, the next level of choices in relation to the research was to determine a clearer focus for the study. The wide range of dance styles that are practiced in social dance events have already been described. In order to undertake a manageable ethnographic study, my attention was drawn to two dance styles in particular, which were both accessible to me and would present some degree of contrast for comparison. Scandinavian folk music and social dance had been increasingly introduced into the programme at some Euro dance events, but at first, it was only popular with a few very enthusiastic individuals. This style of dance was very unlike the dances usually practiced at these events, many people found them difficult to do, and the music seemed strange and esoteric compared with what they were used to. However, I had observed that it did attract the attention of a small number of people, particularly experienced dancers, who enjoyed the challenge and the contrast in style to what they had perhaps practiced for many years. With this raised profile it appeared to be slowly growing in popularity, and the mostly fiddle based music in particular, also drew the attention of increasing numbers of string musicians. In general, however, this style of folk music and dance was not considered part of Euro dance by participants that I encountered, and its rising popularity was reflected in a steady rise in the number of small Scandinavian folk music and social dance events being organised. While socialising with musicians and dancers at Euro dance events, I had also heard of social dance events related to Cajun and Zydeco. I found, and as will be explained in Chapter 2, that this style of social dance had been popular in the UK for longer than Euro dance but that the number of Cajun and Zydeco events appeared to have dwindled drastically over the years. Nevertheless, two main Cajun and Zydeco events were

part of the yearly calendar and were as big as the more frequent annual Euro dance events. While attending a music event in the south of England, I had been told that one of these annual Cajun and Zydeco events was being held at Gloucester that same weekend, and on my way home my curiosity led me to call in and see what was going on. I found a very lively and busy festival that was in many ways similar to the larger Euro dance events I was familiar with, but was also in other respects very different. Scandinavian and Cajun and Zydeco therefore represented two styles of folk social dance, one apparently growing in popularity and the other apparently declining, and that were contrasting in a number of other ways, which made them an interesting comparison. Most importantly, however, they showed distinct similarities and this made them attractive in terms of seeking a resolution to the research question

My earlier involvement in Euro dance was therefore not only influential in determining the focus of the study, but also the manner in which it would be approached and the perspective taken. In early ethnography, an anthropologist would spend an extensive amount of time in the field, usually immersed in unfamiliar surroundings. However, the position of the researcher in relation to the subject of study can vary according to their approach, and their perspective can be either *etic*, the outsider viewpoint, or *emic*<sup>5</sup>, the insider viewpoint (Enos 2013; p. 716). A large part of the fieldwork in these earlier studies would involve participant observation, and the documenting of the experience of being part of these 'exotic' surroundings. The assumption on which these studies were based was that by taking the 'etic' perspective, a degree of objectivity would be gained from the viewpoint of the outsider-looking-in (Letts 1996). Studies that are more recent have challenged this idea, and these studies have taken an emic approach, emphasising the value of insider knowledge. My experience through ten years of involvement in Euro dance, placed me as an insider within folk music and social dance, and therefore could have

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<sup>5</sup> "Emic" and "etic," were derived from an analogy with the terms "phonemic" and "phonetic," and were coined by the linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike. He suggests that there are two perspectives that can be employed in the study of a society's cultural system. 'The emic perspective focuses on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society'. 'The native members of a culture are the sole judges of the validity of an emic description'. 'The etic perspective relies upon the extrinsic concepts and categories that have meaning for scientific observers', Scientists are the sole judges of the validity of an etic account.'(Letts 1996: p. 1)

determined an emic perspective to this research. However, while there can be no doubt that this involvement was useful; this knowledge also impressed upon me the limitations of this experience, and the level of diversity within the practice of these social dance styles. The specific social groups and dance styles that I was to study were totally unfamiliar to me, and the research therefore involved the learning of new practices in unfamiliar settings. To this extent, this positioned me as an outsider, a researcher taking an etic approach. These different approaches have been the subject of academic controversy in the past, particularly between linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike who originated the terms (Pike 1967), and the cultural anthropologist Marvin Harris. For Harris, etic knowledge is an end in itself, and renders a detached and distanced view that can approach a balanced and objective analysis of a situation (Harris 1976). Pike's view, however, is that etic knowledge is a means by which to get to an emic understanding in creating an interpretive account of a social setting, and it is in this way that this research can be understood. In this study, both the etic and emic aspects of the approach come together, in order to draw up interpretive conclusions concerning the meaning and significance of these activities.

The transition from an etic to an emic perspective, through greater involvement, was necessary in order to address the ending clause of the research question; *to those taking part*. My approach to this research was therefore, not one of already being involved in the social setting, as a 'native ethnographer' (Cottrell 2004) or of the 'native researcher' (Chiener 2002), but was one which depended on *becoming* involved, and therefore on pursuing both etic and emic knowledge. Both the etic and emic approaches have advantages and disadvantages that an ethnographer must balance through mindful reflection on the research process. For example, being already involved in the cultural system being explored could lead an insider to think less critically about the observations being made, and to exclude the insights that might be gained from learning about something that is unfamiliar. However, an insider may find it easier to understand the conventions, customs, and symbols in use and which they seek to interpret, and may be more able to use them correctly. There would therefore be less risk of upsetting people through inappropriate behaviour, and the ethnographer involved in participant observation will have a

better idea of where to be, and when. My earlier involvement in folk music and social dance, proved to be an advantage to this research in a number of ways, as it gave me easy access to information, and helped to introduce me to contacts to follow this up. I had also built up a level of competence in both playing music for dance and dancing, which meant that I was able to become more fully involved in the setting more quickly. I was therefore soon able to establish myself as a participant, and this acceptance meant that I was able to talk openly about my research interest even while becoming involved. However, as a stranger and newcomer to these dance styles, I also benefited because existing participants were keen to 'take me under their wing' and show me the ropes, and reciprocated my curiosity by sharing their interests in what was going on. I was therefore able to attend events with the bright and attentive gaze of someone in new surroundings, while also having the friendship and support of established participants as guides. The greatest advantage of this approach, however, was in the fact that my involvement as researcher did not need to be intrusive and, handled sensitively, my interests were accepted as part of my participation, avoiding any need to be covert with all the inherent difficulties that that may involve. My intention through this strategy was also to blur the distinction between 'them and us', the researched and the researcher, to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the practice of these dance styles.

## ii) Application of methodology – Immersive involvement

My involvement with both the Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian dance styles, began very early on in the research process and soon after the two dance styles had been identified, in order to quickly gain insider knowledge about events and activities associated with them. By attending one event, I was able to find out where and when the next event would be, and by picking up flyers and talking with people attending the events, I was soon able to build up a picture of the extent of these activities in the UK. Four events were attended prior to January 2011 in order to introduce and familiarise myself with these social settings, but the main body of fieldwork was undertaken between January 2011 until March 2014 (See Appendix A). In this time, the focus of involvement was on learning about these social settings and becoming established as a participant, and later on establishing contacts for

interviews. During this period, the approach taken and the knowledge gained, moved from etic to emic, although there is no clear dividing line between the two. In the period of this research, I attended five annual Scandinavian folk music and social dance events that took part over several days. I also attended one other Scandinavian event that is held occasionally and irregularly. In addition, I attended four annual Cajun and Zydeco events, all of which took place over a weekend. I also attended two monthly Cajun and Zydeco events that are held most months of the year, one event that is held occasionally and irregularly, and two one-off events. For all of the events in both dance styles I attended for the full duration of the event, often arriving early and leaving after it had finished, in order to contextualise and gain the widest view of the event. While this thesis reflects the extent and scale of these activities in the UK, the fieldwork itself covers the majority of events during this period and is confined to locations within England and Wales. For the purpose of research and to further aid in reporting I have continued to attend events and maintain the contacts that have been made.

Reference to debate about the concept of 'the field' in ethnographic research was made earlier, and this debate becomes relevant in this thesis. The idea of the field as a circumscribed area of study (Burgess 1991; p. 1), became a concern in this research when we wish to understand such questions as, how big is the field, or alternatively, how many people take part in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK? The simple answer to this is that we do not know, and I would suggest that this is almost impossible to determine. I have, however, been able to identify and attend established national events, and from this, to also attend events that were publicised through word-of-mouth and paper flyers, discussion of which is included in the main body of the thesis. This study therefore describes the main activities in England and Wales over the period of the research, and the extent of participation in these events. This can therefore only give an impression of the number of people involved in these styles of dancing nationally. Email lists of those who have shown an interest do exist for particular events, and recently, notifications have started to be placed on social media sites by organisers. However, email lists are often not up to date, and while a person may have shown an interest in finding out about events sometime in the past, this does not give any

indication of the extent of their involvement. Reliable data concerning the extent of involvement in these two dance styles, and therefore the size of the field, is therefore illusive.

This situation is additionally complicated as participants may migrate between a clutch of similar events and activities, such as involvement in Cajun festivals and Bluegrass festivals, Polish dance and Swedish dance, which are examples that were given by participants. It follows therefore that quantitative proportions, such as the proportion of musicians and dancers who participate in events abroad as discussed in Chapter 3, for example, or other similar questions, are equally difficult to determine. Such interest in 'how many' is born out of a view of the field as being circumscribed, confined, and by inference, regulated in some way, which these social settings are not. For the ethnographer, 'the tendency to treat the field site as a place which one goes to and dwells within, reinforces an idea of culture as something which exists in and is bounded by physical space' (Hine 2000; p. 58). The reality, as I have demonstrated, is that boundaries are blurred, and even where they have been constructed, they are porous and flexible. In this study, we are left therefore with only an impression of 'the field', and in this thesis, this impression is developed and explained throughout the report.

As an established participant in Euro dance, I undertook some initial exploratory work with some of these participants in order to attempt to gauge what reactions and opinions I may encounter in this study, and to inform the methods and approach I would take. I had become aware that there was potential for difficulties, from an occasion when a young man started taking photographs at a Euro Dance Bal, and a number of dancers had felt disturbed by this, suggesting that it is was rude and intrusive. He had not been prepared for such a reaction, but sensing the unease, he soon chose a moment to introduce himself, and explain that he was taking a few photographs of dancers' feet for a student project, and offered to make copies available to anyone who asked. This dissipated the situation and, as he was otherwise participating in the event as a dancer, there was no further upset. I was therefore interested to know what type of reception my involvement as a researcher was likely to have amongst dancers and musicians, and how I could approach my fieldwork sensitively in these settings. At several events, I decided to canvass the



opinions of Euro dance participants who I have known socially for a number of years, about my proposed research and its methods. Having no other point of reference, I discussed the research strictly using the terms established in ethnography, and came across some interesting reactions to these terms. The term participant observation in particular appeared to raise suspicions, and I gathered, rather than being neutral, sounded intrusive, prying, and impersonal. When related back to the nature of these social settings where everyone takes part and there is no audience, this may be understandable, as to those involved, the two words 'participant observer' appear to contradict each other. This is also the conclusion of ethnographer Karen O'Reilly, who, in her discussion of participant observation concludes that this term is an oxymoron, with inherent tensions that must be resolved according to the circumstances and situation being researched (O'Reilly 2009). In these social settings, being a 'participant' is the accepted norm, however, 'observation' implies the opposite to this, a degree of detachment from what is going on or being part of an audience; the resulting contradiction perhaps raising confusion as to which of these my involvement would be. Those who do take part in these types of social dance are very aware that by its nature, it is not performed for an audience, and would not wish it to be otherwise. One woman also addressed my role as a participant observer, stating that she would find it disturbing dancing with me and would be wondering whether I was taking mental notes, and analysing her every move or everything that she said. When I pursued this, she explained that dancing together can be an invitation to share personal space, requiring trust and cooperation, and should be accepted on equal terms and not with individual and separate agenda. This topic is expanded upon and explained further in Chapter 5, where other dancers discuss the experience of dancing in this context. Interviews were similarly discussed, and I learned a great deal about how to go about this research with sensitivity to those involved, and without disrupting proceedings. These conversations reminded me that participation in these activities is highly valued by those involved, and that this matter should be respected and not taken for granted. In the abstract for this thesis I have used the term *immersive involvement*, to describe more clearly the approach that I have taken to this part of fieldwork, in preference to the term *participant observation*. The use of the term immersive involvement, addresses many concerns of those taking part in these settings, by

making clear what my position is within these settings. It indicates my desire and commitment to learn through engagement with other participants, in much the same way as anyone else would who is new to this activity and environment. It therefore avoids the idea that I was someone they would perform to as an audience, or as a detached 'observer'. This choice of term also takes into account the earlier discussion concerning the perspective taken, and is intended to reflect the process of transition from etic to emic that I have described. This preliminary exploration and its outcome therefore proved to be very productive, and was very influential in informing what would be an appropriate strategy for ethnographic research into these social settings.

My preliminary exploration, and my background and experience, played an important role in preparing me for attending events, and for becoming involved with participants and in whatever was going on, traditionally referred to as working in the field. My discussions with Euro dance participants had raised my awareness of some of the sensitivities of social dance participants, and I would be as open as possible about the details of my research project. Due to the participatory nature of these events, there was no option to take a passive role, therefore my involvement would be immersive, and as a result my research interests would run parallel to this involvement, as detailed in the following section.

Initial impressions gained by participation in these events and activities proved to be very positive, and served as a solid foundation for my later fieldwork. I found event organisers were very approachable, and understandably very pleased with their organisational achievements, and I wasted no time explaining my research to them and seeking their approval for including their events in the study. In all cases, I explained my ideas about the approach I would take, and some asked pertinent questions for clarification, but all greeted my proposal with encouragement and cooperation. While event organisers perhaps initially recognised me as an advocate for the style of music and dance that was undoubtedly their passion, they continued to give me their full support and cooperation throughout the study. Established participants in both groups were keen to encourage new members and were welcoming and accepting, and through getting involved, I was soon recognised as someone who shared these interests. From early on I was concerned with being

open about my background and my research interests and, in the course of conversations, I made deliberate efforts to mention these, and my openness was greeted overwhelmingly with approval and support. Some participants showed greater interest than others, but there were also participants who said that they would relish the opportunity themselves to write about this type of music and dancing. My engagement with fellow participants came easily, and conversations were generally easy to initiate and I felt accepted as a participant, who also had a research interest in what was going on.

I recorded my involvement in what are traditionally known as field notes; however, I was subject to certain restrictions due to considerations of the setting, and I found my own solutions to the challenges these presented. To write field notes while participating in these social settings would have disrupted what was going on, and would have distanced me from other participants, potentially creating a barrier that in terms of the research would be unproductive but was also unnecessary. Further to this, I wanted to be open to the experience, and did not want to let this be interrupted by not being fully involved because I was distracted by my notebook, which may also lead me to miss something. As an alternative to notes taken in the field, I kept a field diary that I wrote retrospectively at the earliest opportunity after an event, and this proved to be beneficial in a number of other ways. For example, in her study, Powdermaker (1966) drew attention to the need in some settings for the field worker to move back and forth between involvement as participant, and detachment as an academic, and I used the field diary as a bridge between these two. My notes were based on reflections and observations of the activities in which I had been involved, as well as methodological notes about the study. Burgess (1984) suggests one way to systematically record field notes is by using pre-set forms, however, I found this restricting and it proved a very difficult task to organise coherently. I soon concluded that my concerns about structuring these notes was putting much of the content at risk, and had become a battle of form over substance. These field diaries were after all experiential, and after some thought, I looked into a technique used in creative writing, known as stream of consciousness writing (Bowling 1950; Mapham 2003). This technique involves a relaxing of the rules of grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation in order to put on paper one's internal monologue and thoughts (Stein

1995). I found that by using this method, more information could be recorded in a shorter period of time and while the experience was still new, accuracy was maintained, and greater detail could be written down. However, I found that my field diary became not only a means by which I could record from recent memory the events and activities I have been involved in, but also a valuable platform in processing the internal monologue of reflection. The field diary therefore assisted in the development of ideas about my thesis, and in particular in the exploration of connections and comparisons between the two different social settings. Notes from my field diaries within the body of this report have followed the convention of referencing; field note (fn), followed by the date the note was written, for example (fn, 10/01/2012).

Field notes, captured in a reflective and free-flowing field-diary such as this, closely follow an approach proposed by Barz in his writings based on his experience of working in the field. He suggests several analytical models that describe the process of using field notes in ethnographic studies of music, but prefers a model where field notes act as the 'fulcrum' that balance experience and interpretation (Barz 1996; p. 54). Interpretation is therefore on-going, and not only part of the reporting of the research, 'field research becomes more interactive, allowing time, reflection, and change to assume greater roles in the mediation of knowing' (ibid.). Such field notes, he adds, also act as an outlet for the researcher's introspection, and a researcher can benefit from reflection on their own research (ibid.; p. 51). In this same way, the field diaries that I kept served as a place to document the experience of involvement in these music and dance practices, and the distanced approach enabled such reflection.

However, wherever they are written, field note formation is reliant to some extent upon the ethnographer's memory, and will be subject to choices in the processes of inclusion and exclusion. There will be points during this thesis when extracts from my field diary are quoted, or used to support the description of activities and events, or casual conversations. If another ethnographer undertook this type of ethnographic data gathering at the same event, however, it is likely they would have a completely different set of annotations. It is therefore important to note that in

general, field notes are not a straightforward translation of experiences and that on their own, field notes only provide a partial description of the researcher's experience, which can be used to assist in an interpretation of a social setting.

iii) Application of methodology – detachment of interviews

As mentioned earlier, in ethnographic research, participant observation is often complimented with interviews, and this research is based on findings from in-depth one-to-one interviews with participants in Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance events. In total 30 interviews were conducted between April 2011 and August 2012, fifteen interviews with members of each of these groups, however, one interview from the Scandinavian group was discarded due to the poor quality of the recording caused by a technical difficulty. Of the Cajun and Zydeco group, seven were female and eight male. Thirteen participants described themselves as dancers, two as musicians and one person identified as a musician and dancer. Of the Scandinavian group, six were female and eight male. Within this group eight people described themselves as dancers, six as musicians, and five referred to themselves as both a musician and dancer (see Appendix B).

The following discussion focuses on the ethnicity, age, and class of those who were interviewed in order to give an indication of the social makeup and demographic structure of participation in these dance styles. It is important to note that this information is treated separately to other interview data in order to preserve the anonymity of the interview participants, as discussed later in this section.

Ethnically<sup>6</sup>, the vast majority of participants in both dance styles are White British; however, the involvement of a very small number of Asian British participants at some Cajun and Zydeco events is atypical but noteworthy. Dancers and musicians that travel from other countries in Europe to festivals in Britain are generally all White. All those interviewed were White British.

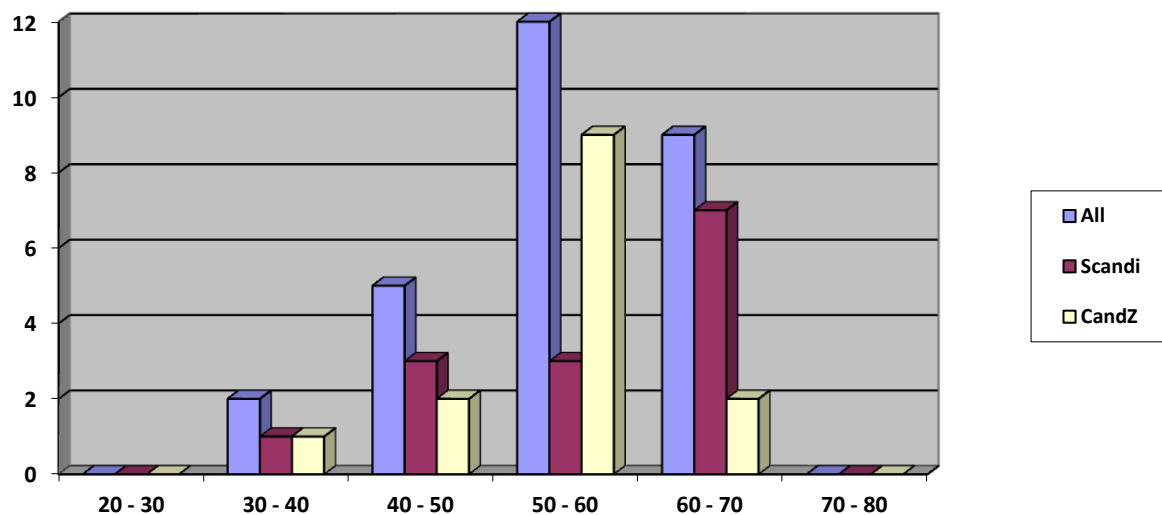
Following their interview, participants were contacted by email, and were asked their age and occupation at the time of the interview, and this is represented in the following two block graphs. All but one of the Cajun and Zydeco interviewees

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<sup>6</sup> The terminology used in this study for ethnic group, is the 18-category classification recommended by the UK Government Office for National statistics. (ONS 2011)

responded to the email, giving information for 28 of the participants interviewed; 14 participants from each dance style.

Those who were interviewed were asked within what age range they belong at the time of their interview. The following block graph is a representation of the age distribution of those interviewed for this study.



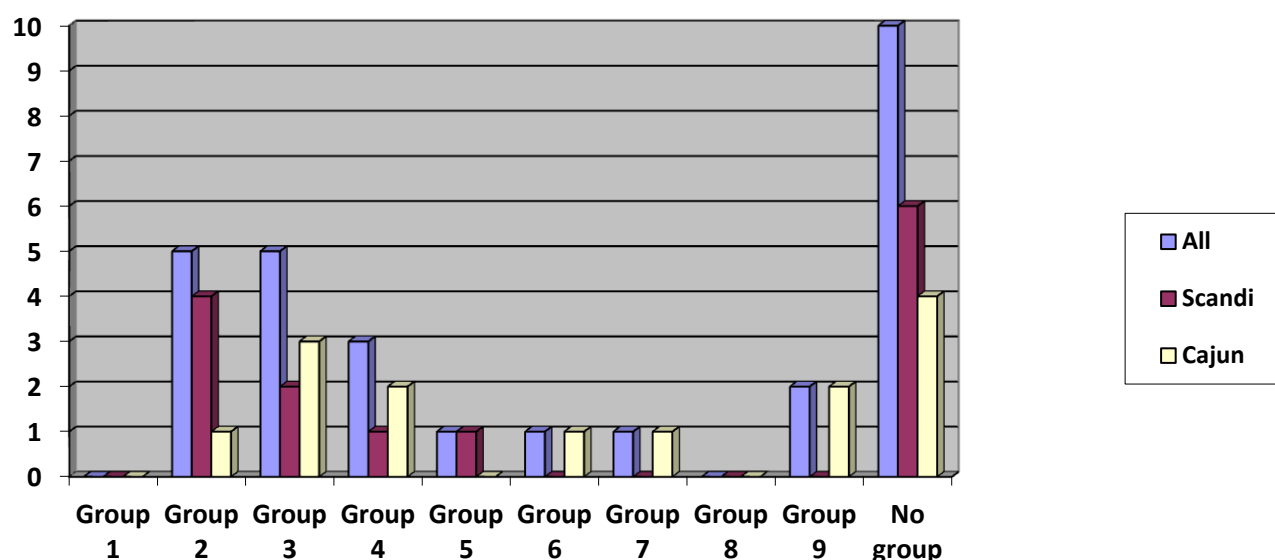
**Figure 1 – Age Range of participants interviewed**

Figure 1, shows that the majority of those interviewed were aged between 50 and 70 years (21 of those interviewed from the sample of 28). The modal group<sup>7</sup> for those interviewed about Scandinavian folk dance was older than that of Cajun and Zydeco interviewees (the 60 to 70 years age group compared with the 50 to 60 years age group respectively). Of the Cajun and Zydeco interviewees, there was also almost double the number of participants in their modal group than in all other age groups. For those interviewed about Scandinavian folk dance, the number of participants in the modal group was equal to that of participants in the other age groups.

Interviewees were also asked their occupation at the time of their interview. In order to further mitigate against the possibility of interview participants being identified, their responses were grouped according to major occupational groups (Appendix C),

<sup>7</sup> Modal group is the term commonly used in statistical analysis for the group most represented in a sample.

according to Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC2010), produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2010). This information is represented in the block graph, Figure 2.



**Figure 1: Occupation Groups of participants Interviewed.**

By far the largest group interviewed were those who are not categorisable according to the SOC2010 occupational groups, which includes people who are not in paid employment, such as those who are retired or are in full time education. One third of all those interviewed belonged to this group and were nearly all retired; these were also the modal group according to occupation in both dance styles. Of those who could be categorised according to occupation, the responses of those interviewed about Scandinavian dance, were mostly clustered around professional occupations. The occupations of those interviewed about their involvement in Cajun and Zydeco, were much more widely, and evenly distributed through the nine occupational groups. None of those who took part in the interviews belonged to occupational group 8, which contains persons employed in the manufacturing industry, and this may be a reflection of the shrinkage of that sector in the economy in recent decades.

There are many drawbacks to using this information as quantitative data in this qualitative research, and caution should be exercised when drawing concrete conclusions from the information about age and occupation represented here. For example, dancers and musicians younger than 30 and older than 70 are not represented in the groups interviewed, although a small number do take part in these activities. In addition, the modal age group for Cajun and Zydeco conveniently corresponds to the height of popularity of this style of dance in Britain, when these participants would have been in their twenties. It could therefore be concluded that this was the reason for the clustering of interviewees in this age group, however, interviews proved that not to be the case, and showed that many of those interviewed in this age group had become involved in Cajun and Zydeco relatively recently. Such clustering of information about age and occupation, may be a consequence of cohort factors<sup>8</sup> that can be a draw-back of the snowball sampling method used in determining who to interview, discussed later in this chapter. Factors such as this must be taken into account when drawing conclusions from this small sample data, together with the following additional restrictions.

In this section, data about occupation has been used in order to give an indication of the social makeup of those who take part in these dance styles, however, this approach is limited in what it can tell us, and in its value in reflecting social makeup. Analysis based on occupation has been used in the past as it was considered to reflect a person's level of income and therefore, to also reflect their level of education (Savage et al 2013). This would then be used to position a person in society according to social classes such as middle class and working class. However, in contemporary society this may not present an accurate picture as it may not fairly reflect individuals' aspiration or lifestyle choices, which may be highly significant in arts-based activities such as this. In addition, this type of analysis does not take into account factors such as social mobility, or changing attitudes and criteria for what is a satisfying life. Much of the recent work on class distinctions that define social makeup, (cf. Bennett et al. 2008; Crompton 2008; Savage 2010) is influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984,1987; Weininger 2005), and argues that analysis

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<sup>8</sup> In snowball sampling, in an attempt to avoid interviewer bias, each participant in a survey is asked to suggest the next person to take part in the survey, however, some surveys have observed that individuals may associate within cohorts of similarly minded individuals, for example of a similar age, and therefore the survey sample may become biased because of this.



based on occupation does not take into account the social and cultural processes that define social divisions. These works have looked more closely at social, cultural and economic capital as markers of these divisions. Such an analysis if applied to these groups of folk social dancers, would elicit a more rigorous discussion of the social makeup and demographic structure of participation in these dance style, however, this would require a different set of information to what is available.

The information here concerning age and occupation is only significant in terms of the small sample group who were interviewed, and it is uncertain whether this is representative of all those who take part. Without information from a much larger number of participants in these dance styles, it is not possible to say whether this is a true reflection of the social makeup of participants. In addition, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, quantitative information about the number of people involved in these folk social dance groups is very hard to obtain, due to the unstructured and casual nature of their organisation. As with all ethnography, and discussed earlier, another researcher at these events, may obtain a different set of information, and may reach alternative conclusions and present a different interpretive account of these social settings. It is therefore not suggested that this information is statistically significant, or that it is an exact representation of those who take part in these dance styles. Together with information gathered through participation in these groups, however, it is possible to judge that the groups of those interviewed represent a adequate selection of people who are involved in these dance styles.

Often in ethnographic reporting insufficient attention is given to explaining how interviewees are selected, the techniques used in interviews, or the context in which the interviews were held, which if the study is to be understood comprehensively is a considerable omission. In the following section, I shall therefore discuss these details in some depth, and explain the important decisions taken that led to the design of the interview process. The choice of where interviews should be held can be instrumental in determining outcomes and this is the point from which I begin this explanation. The next topic discussed is the choice of who to interview, which can have a decisive influence on what information is gathered, and can also have a strong influence on how participant observation is interpreted in the final account of the study. Finally, I discuss the interview process itself, how ethical standards were

maintained, the techniques used in interviews, and the conduct of the interviews themselves.

The interviews required detailed planning to ensure consistency, and several principles were observed based on sensitivity towards participants in this study, and my previous experience of ethnographic interviewing. As was the case with the recording of field notes, interviews were conducted away from events and activities in order to avoid disrupting what was going on. In addition, I was mindful that musicians and dancers attend events and festivals in order to take part, and I considered that it would be insensitive and inconsiderate to place my research agenda ahead of this by taking up their time at these events. My experience of conducting interviews of a small number of participants in my earlier study of Euro dance (Kiddy 2008), also informed my approach. I had found that while interviewing at a festival, the interviewee's attention and discussion generally gravitated to the present, and in particular the event currently being attended. While this was not inappropriate for my research at the time, my interests now were less specific, and I wished participants to discuss their involvement more generally, and conducting interviews away from activities was a way to avoid this tendency. Having established that I would hold the interviews in isolation from participation, my next concern was where interviews should be held.

One of the ways in which ethnographic interviews differ from other interviews, is that the ethnographer aims to establish a mutually respectful and on-going relationship with the people being researched, involving trust, and cooperation (Heyl 2001). It was also important for me to demonstrate the collaborative nature of this research, and I saw giving the choice of location for the interview as one way in which I could do this. I also felt that it was important for the person being interviewed to feel comfortable in the surroundings where the interview was being held, my assumption being that they were more likely to choose such a venue than if I had made the choice. Arrangements for the interviews were therefore made by email or telephone, and the person being interviewed was informed that the discussion would be informal and relaxed, and asked if they objected to the interview being recorded. I asked them to suggest the place and the time, and I travelled to where they suggested. In most cases, the interview was held in a neutral space, such as a coffee shop, cafe, a quiet pub or wine bar, close to where the interviewee lived or

worked. A small number invited me to their homes for the interview, and in all cases the guidelines as set out in the University of Liverpool, Code of Practice on Health and Safety in Fieldwork were adhered to (USHA 2011). It was important to accept these invitations into interviewees' homes because they were then able to show me videos, magazines, flyers, records and personal memorabilia, which were important to them, and these items prompted more depth to the interview by triggering memories and enhancing detail. One interviewee brought personal memorabilia and flyers to the interview in the café she had chosen as the venue. With these organisational principles in place, I now faced the question of whom to interview.

Due to the difficulties involved in determining the extent of participation in these events in the UK, as discussed earlier, the question of how to select participants for interview presented a challenge. The type of sampling used in many applied social science research projects and in qualitative research such as this, is known as nonprobability sampling. This is used when it is not possible to ascertain what a representative sample would be because the total number of those involved is not known, and random sampling would likewise be unproductive (Trochim 2006). Using this type of sampling method, and a technique known as snowball or chain sampling (cf. Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Browne 2005), I was also able to make use of the small informal social network of Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian participants. This technique requires that, at the end of an interview, the interviewee is asked whom else they would recommend to be interviewed. I found this a very useful strategy because this not only widened my range of contacts, but in most cases, it made asking the next person if they would agree to be interviewed much easier, and trust and cooperation are also passed on through introduction by one participant to another. One of the potential drawbacks of this procedure, however, is that those interviewed may come from only a small circle of acquaintances (Merkens 2004), but an awareness of this made it possible for me to avoid such clustering when approaching the next person to be interviewed. While choices that affect the outcome of the research must be made at all stages, this technique is useful because it goes some way to militate against some of the bias the ethnographer may stumble into, wittingly or unwittingly during the course of the research. It would have been possible in these circumstances for example, for me as a male dancer to make

contact with mostly female participants, due to the nature of the couple social dances practiced, and chain sampling is one way in which this was avoided.

The interview process was made as simple and open as possible, while still maintaining and safeguarding confidentiality, and the integrity of the information gathered. Before commencing any interviews, ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the University of Liverpool Research Ethics Committee, and advice was given about providing an information sheet and consent form in order to comply with the standards of the committee. An information sheet was prepared which gave details of the study and of the interview process, and this was emailed to interviewees prior to the interview (See Appendix D). When arranging the interview, interviewees had agreed that they were happy for their interview to be recorded and for this to be later transcribed, and this was confirmed before the interview began. Participants were informed that nothing of what they said would be used without their permission, and that the interview would be treated anonymously, so that there would be no reference to them or anyone else in the interview. Interviews would be given a reference number and securely archived on the University of Liverpool main computer, where I would have sole access. In any subsequent reporting of the research, appropriate pseudonyms would be used in order to maintain anonymity and for the sake of clarity of the writing. Interviewees were also informed that following the interview, if they were still happy to contribute to the research, as a University requirement, they would be asked to sign a consent form to that effect (See Appendix E).

My experience of interviewing participants in Euro dance gave me some insights into what should be my approach to interviewing Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian participants, and had impressed upon me several points that I wished to take into account. Many of the Euro dance participants had told me that they had enjoyed their interview more than they had anticipated, explaining that they rarely have a chance to talk about their involvement in folk music and social dance in this way. Most often, I found that what they had enjoyed was the opportunity to *tell their story*, and after the interview, they felt buoyed-up, the experience giving them very positive feelings and having been cathartic, this was unexpected and it interested me.

Interviewees had talked mostly biographically; many had contextualised this in terms of their creativity and friendships, and personal emotions, understandings and beliefs that were very important to them. I had therefore to some extent been privileged with limited access to, 'get inside the heads' of the people being interviewed, which as noted earlier Spradley suggests is the general aim of ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979; p. 8). I therefore decided to pursue this idea, and looked to other contexts, for a model of one to one interaction involving similar discourse that may help me to improve the quality and consistency of the interviews. I found this in person-centred counselling as practiced by many mental health services, and I used this as a guide to how I should conduct these interviews.

The task of the ethnographic interviewer and the counsellor are comparable, in that their aim is to facilitate the person in telling their story, and similarly they have, by design, an explicit purpose, although be it to different ends. The role of the counsellor is to 'listen with a very deliberate and structured agenda that is essentially different from the agenda most of us have in our daily conversational exchanges, [in that it] is much more one-sided' (Mills 2009; p. 1). The focus of these encounters is the person being counselled, and the counsellor use their curiosity to help a person talk about their experience, and aim to create a setting where they feel safe to do so. The counsellor's way of 'achieving this atmosphere is by not forcing the pace of the session with a lot of questions', and by 'offering a response that is reflective, even meditative at times' (ibid.). There are therefore, many parallels between the role of the counsellor, and the focus of the discussions in counselling sessions, and the ethnographer's role and focus in ethnographic interviews.

One of the ways in which I approached creating an atmosphere of trust and security, involved the choice of interview venue, discussed above. Another way in which this was achieved was by limiting the number of questions, a point discussed subsequently. Counsellors are therefore trained to listen carefully and actively, and to encourage dialogue, although often in difficult circumstances; skills that the ethnographic interviewer can cultivate. The skill of 'active listening' is regarded as 'the foundation of understanding' in counselling (Egan 2010; p. 136), and this is also one of the aims of ethnographic interviewing. 'Dialogue-focused communication skills', have the aim of 'being non-judgmental, and eliciting essential information' (Beck et al. 1979; p. 88), and can also benefit the ethnographic interviewer. I should

add, that I do not wish to undermine the years of training and skill of professional counsellors, or to imply that I could exercise such skills having only studied them academically; however, knowledge of these techniques can be valuable to the ethnographer. For example, these skills can improve the ability for the ethnographer's contribution in interviews to be measured, considered, and controlled while being natural, an example of what Schön describes as reflection in action, discussed earlier (Schön 1988). Interviews for this study were certainly enhanced by my knowledge of counselling techniques, and these were influential in how I conducted these interviews. In particular, my aim in interviewing the participants in these two groups was to allow them to determine the course of the interview, guided by two open questions, and to express their own ideas about their involvement in these activities, the details of how this was achieved I shall now move on to explain.

Interviews are generally considered stressful situations, and I was conscious of the possibility of needing to reassure interviewees from the point of asking them whether they would take part, that this would not be formal and would, I hoped, be an enjoyable exercise. I also explained that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I would ask, and that I would only be asking about their personal experience of folk music and social dance, questions that only they can answer. The interviews themselves were semi structured, informal, and conversational and, following advice taken from counselling, consisted of the following two principle open questions: 'How did you get involved in folk social dance?', and 'What would you say is the appeal of taking part?'.

I judged that open questions were best suited for my purpose because I was interested in the interviewee's points of view and interests. If I had asked, for example, about A, they would have answered that question, when really, their interest is in B, and they may therefore not necessarily be inclined to talk about B. If asked for clarification, I encouraged participants to decide for themselves how broadly they wished to interpret the questions, my intention being to allow room for interviewees to talk about what is important to them as participants. I was therefore particularly interested to establish a view of participation from a perspective other than my own, 'by empowering interviewees to shape according to their world-views, the questions being asked and possibly even the focus of the research study' (Heyl 2001; p. 369). The success of this approach may be judged by the length of the

interviews, the average length being over one hour, and the quality of the information passed on to me by those I interviewed which is documented in this thesis. As suggested in the quote above, the information gathered in these interviews played a large part in determining the direction of this research, as common themes emerged in the ideas and interests of participants.

This approach to interviewing, took account of the sensibilities of interviewees, and helped to develop a relationship of mutual trust and collaboration. It took account of the experience of my earlier study of Euro dance and built on this productively, in particular taking into account the mixed feelings that participants naturally have, when approached and asked to be interviewed. The aim was to encourage, openness, honesty, and articulacy, and in the majority of cases, I was able to build up a rapport with an interviewee, such that it was possible to have a genuine and open exchange of views, with time for them to describe their involvement in their own words. Consequently, the information imparted to me in all of these interviews was invaluable to the study, and was a major contribution to understanding participation from the perspective of those involved.

### The Ethnographic Report – an approach to writing up

Having discussed and contextualised the specific methods used in this study, as grounded in the experiences of participants, and highlighted the continued use of reflective practice, it is now important to discuss the writing style adopted throughout this thesis. This section discusses and explains the ethnographic report which forms the main body of this thesis, beginning with an explanation of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and going on to discuss the compatible, grounded approach that has also been adopted in presenting this ethnography.

As has been stated earlier, how people are represented in any ethnographic research is of primary importance, and is critically influenced by the relationship of the researcher to the researched. There has been much interest in how ethnographic studies have been written up (Okely and Callaway 1992; Van Maanen 1988; Geertz 1975; Hastrup 1992), and issues relating to the writing of ethnographic research can be considered as important as the methods and approach. For Barz,

this is part of the continuous process of documenting research, from field notes to writing the final report, and he states, 'what an individual fieldworker eventually selects to document, is just as important as the methodology employed' (Barz 1996; p. 55). The writing of the ethnographic experience is often the final product of the research, and can place the ethnographer in a position of considerable authority, as the authorship of these experiences may also influence the sense that is made of these settings. These are clearly important issues and writing style should therefore be considered in any overall discussion of methodology, and in the following section, I consider how these affect this report, and explain the directions that I have taken.

The positions of researcher and researched in this study can be explained by considering them both as being stakeholders in the ethnographic project, and this serves as a useful construct to help explain my approach to reporting this ethnographic research. A stakeholder is someone who has an interest or concern in a project, and who is crucial to the success of the project and its potential outcomes (Morphy 2014). Although this idea originated in management studies in business (cf. Freeman 1984), it has recently been applied to a wider range of public policy issues that require 'approaches to democracy and social justice, in which the interests of the nominally powerless must be given weight' (Bryson 2004; p. 22). The position of being a stakeholder involves investment or having ownership, and a responsibility for certain obligations and rights, and this can be applied to the relationship of both the researcher and the researched in ethnographic reporting. I have taken the view that both parties are dependent on the other, and that both have an interest in the end product of the research, the ethnographic report. This proved to be particularly the case in this study where both parties have invested in the research, the researcher academically, and the researched by providing evidence and testimony. However, the researcher is the main stakeholder and beneficiary of the research and as the author of the report has the most influence, while the researched may benefit from the research but are nominally powerless. The implications of these relationships in terms of obligations and rights can be explained further.

The relationship of the researcher to what is written-up is clearly one of authorship, and this confers a number of areas of responsibility and obligation on the ethnographer. The integration of reflective practice at all stages of the research, including the writing up, is a response to the responsibilities of the researcher in the



study. The awareness brought about by this draws attention to the understanding that the process of writing involves a further round of selection and choices, in addition to those described earlier that were made concerning the approach and methods used. Clifford Geertz points out, for example, that ethnographies are constructions of reality, and not reality themselves, they are representations of culture, and are inevitably subject to the creativity and choices made by the researcher (Geertz 1988). As a result of the selections and choices made, there can be no pretence of neutrality, as ethnographic texts can only be written narratives based on the subjective experience of an ethnographer, which Hastrup argues are 'the conjuncture of anthropology and autobiography' (Hastrup 1992; p. 116). The extent to which this research is bound up with the autobiography of the author will have become evident from earlier discussions, in particular through the discussion of my experience of different types of social dance and especially Euro dance. On some topics within this thesis, where I relate my own experiences as a dancer to those of participants, for example, this autobiographic element holds a particularly strong influence, and introduces a tendency towards autoethnography in this study. In addition, when adopting the emic perspective in this research, one of the choices made was that I was not willing to make a pretence of isolating my research from my own involvement. The movement from an etic to an emic perspective, as described earlier, can only help in creating a wider information base, however, its results are ultimately a reporting of the subjective experience of that journey. As has been demonstrated, reflecting on my connections to and involvement in the research, has been extremely useful in describing the approach I have taken, and the adoption of appropriate perspectives. The researcher stakeholder has an obligation to ensure honesty and openness in reporting the study, such that the information that is reported is reliable and valid (Shaffir and Stebbins 1991), in particular in relation to how people in the study are represented. I have therefore taken reflective practice as a responsibility that, as an ethnographic researcher, strongly influences my relationship to what is written-up, and is pivotal to my obligation to academic integrity.

While the stakeholder relationship of the researcher to what is written up, can be represented as one largely of obligations and responsibility, the relationship of the researched is principally one of rights and responsibilities. Like the researcher, the

researched have a responsibility to be truthful and open, although this can only ever be assumed, and in some studies, this level of integrity might be drawn into question. The relationship between the researcher and the researched, however, is one that is built on honesty, respect, and trust, and the reporting of the study should reflect this. The researched therefore have a right to expect that their contribution to the study would be reported in such a way as to uphold any agreements concerning their privacy and confidentiality, such as preserving anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Those who participate in the study therefore also have a right to be represented accurately, and for the information they have given to be presented without distortion. This is not only a matter of the representation of the participants in the social setting, as discussed as an obligation of the researcher, but is also one of re-presenting the information that has been given to the researcher.

In this study, the researched have played a vital role, and without the information that they have given, this investigative research would not have been possible. The researched have therefore invested in this research, something that can easily be taken for granted by a researcher, but in doing so the researched have extended their rights as stakeholders. Similarly, from the researcher's point of view, acceptance of this investment is a further obligation in respect to a debt of gratitude, in addition to the obligations discussed earlier. The example of the interviews in this study demonstrate this, because not only have interviewees given up their time and resources in order to be interviewed, but have shared information about their knowledge and experiences, that previously they were in sole possession of, and it is this that forms the backbone of the study. This information about their knowledge and experiences could be regarded as the intellectual property of the researched, which they have invested in the research project. In reporting this research therefore, I feel that I have a responsibility to those who worked with me, and that this should be reflected in the style of writing and how the study is presented and written up.

The intention in writing this thesis, has been to produce an interpretive account of these activities, which is not only grounded in the interests, knowledge, and experiences of those who take part and who collaborated with me in the study, but which is also accessible to them. Part of the repayment of the debt of gratitude therefore involves the production of a report that is readable, and can be understood

by intelligent people who are outside the academy. Many people have contributed to this research, through their direct involvement in interviews or indirectly through encouragement and support, or by accepting me as a participant researcher in these activities, and along with many others have shown a keen interest in seeing the results of my work. In order to make this research as accessible as possible I have tried to adopt a clear writing style, avoiding what Atkinson refers to as, 'impenetrable jargon' (Atkinson 1990; p. 1). However, I have not done so at the expense of rigour, but have instead sought to balance clarity of expression with a recognition of the required academic standard. Similarly, out of respect, I have avoided reference to the people that I have worked with as; 'informants', 'cases', 'actors in the field', 'target population', 'respondents' or any other similar term often seen in ethnographic research. In addition, I believe that a writing style such as this is appropriate to, and in compliance with, the grounded approach I have taken, where the focus has been on those involved. To compliment the grounded approach taken, and to comply with the readability criteria that I have already discussed, I have avoided where possible using terms and expressions that are unfamiliar within these social settings. It would have been convenient throughout this account, for example, to refer to these social settings as 'scenes', and in my early papers about this research, I did refer to them as 'non-youth music scenes'. The term 'scene' is, of course, one which is used by numerous researchers of popular music (cf. Straw 1991, 2004; Kruse 2003; Webb 2007; Brill 2007; Stahl 2008) and the structure and organisation of these music based activities perhaps has much in common with other music scenes, and literature around music scenes does have relevance to this study. However, I have not privileged this term over other similar terms that are also used by participants, and with which 'scene' appears to be interchangeable, such as 'community' and 'network'. Similarly, however, I have given prominence to terms and expressions that are used by these participants. Scandinavian folk music and social dance, for example, is most commonly referred to simply as Scandi, and Cajun and Zydeco is also most commonly just Cajun, and where appropriate, this is how these styles of dance will be referred to from this Chapter onwards.

The use of quotes taken from interviews brings the study alive, and gives the reader an impression of the people involved in the study. I have therefore been very conscious about using these quotes with a minimum amount of editing so that the

individuality of the people interviewed is maintained. This has been at times very difficult to achieve, because as occurred to me while transcribing these interviews, people rarely observe the same conventions when speaking, as are expected in written English. Extracts from interviews have therefore been included verbatim, with all the 'blemishes' of the spoken word, and with all the idiosyncrasies of accents and colloquialisms.

This account will maintain the conventional academic style appropriate for a doctoral thesis, and while I shall present an in-depth case study of these two styles of folk social dance, the issues raised will be connected with some of the relevant scholarly literature. The process of making this connection, however, was conducted retrospectively and within the writing up process rather than before or during fieldwork, in order to compliment the grounded approach. The direction of the research has therefore, as much as possible, been determined by what was discussed by participants, and information gathered through participation, rather than current issues in scholarly literature around the subject

### Critical Self-reflection

This discussion of the methodology and perspectives used in this research would be incomplete without critical self-reflection on my relationship to the study, the people in the study, and of the research experience (Bourdieu 2003). My involvement and experience of Euro dance, for example, strongly influenced and shaped my relationship to the people in this study, and the choices I made about how to interact with them in conducting fieldwork. In the process of describing the specifics of the methodology used in this study, I have discussed issues relating to these choices concerned with participant observation and interviews, and the very purposeful way in which information was gathered through these techniques. This included for example, a deliberate distancing from the social setting, for both field notes and interviews, in order to avoid influencing the activities taking place and in order to encourage interviewees to discuss their involvement more generally. Interviews were also open and conversational in order to elicit information on topics of importance to those involved in these styles of folk music and social dance. The underlying reasons for these decisions have been discussed and justified in purely

pragmatic terms, largely based on my experience of Euro dance. However, while it is clear that this was a strong influence on the perspective that I chose to take, these choices were also made based on my relationship to the study, and the approach I chose to take begs further discussion and reflection, and this is what I wish to move on to.

As part of the reflective process, the ethnographic researcher has to be aware of the process of making choices involved in the research, and that it is important to understand 'the principles by which they select some situations, events and people but reject others while working in the field' (Burgess 1984; p. 53). Earlier in this Chapter, I discussed how ethnography can only reveal partial truths, that studies do not purport to be objective, and cannot be so because they are dependent on the selection and choices of the researcher, and therefore cannot avoid creating a type of fiction (Clifford 1986; p. 7). The ethnographer can only produce an interpretation from one perspective, and this perspective informs the selections and choices made, which determine the approach to the study. However, the perspective of the ethnographer is a strong influence from the very beginning of the research process, because this perspective informs the choice of research question itself. As discussed earlier, in ethnography the research question is a question *of* a social setting, and is therefore one from an external perspective, and is dependent on the researcher's wider social and cultural, influences and experiences. The research question itself can reflect a great deal about the perspective of the ethnographer, and in particular, the ideas that have guided what the researcher has chosen to focus on in the study. It is therefore important to understand as much as possible about the external perspective that has influenced this researcher's approach, and consequently the partial truths in this study.

The research question in this study is, 'What is the meaning and significance of participation in folk music and social dance for those involved', and this therefore prioritises the views and interests of the participants. In this study, the last three words of the research question are particularly significant, as they signify my perspective at the stage of reporting as an insider, and the choice to have a grounded approach to the gathering and presenting of information that places the interests and views of the participants as being of primary importance. This not only influenced the approach taken to the methods used, as described earlier, but also

had a strong influence on the focus of the research. I made the decision to limit the extent to which I was prescriptive in deciding the focus of this study, and that I would take what participants say and do as the basis for determining what is important, “for those involved.” This can be best seen by taking this research question as the starting point, and describing how the focus of the research evolved as it progressed through my increasing involvement, and especially as participants contributed to the study through their interviews.

The research question, ‘What is the meaning and significance of participation in folk music and social dance, for those involved,’ is very broad, could be answered in a number of ways, and required further focus to form the basis of my research. Such refinement also served to give this question more of a sense of purpose by defining particular areas of interest for the study. Using my insider experience of Euro dance, I was able to identify three areas in the practice of folk music and social dance in the UK that interested me, and these I initially proposed as areas of attention for the focus of this study. The first of these was age, identity, and participation. My involvement as a musician alerted me to the second area that interested me, the accommodation of creativity and improvisation, within ideas about tradition and authenticity in these ‘folk’ styles. The primary concern of musicians and dancers is that the music should be danceable; however, musicians were keen to improvise or include solo spots for particular musicians in some tunes, in much the same manner as is common in jazz performance. Many of the tunes were composed within the last 30 years, and some bands only played their own original material in the style of the dance for which they were playing. Dancers too enjoyed improvising moves creatively and imaginatively, sometimes using influences from other dance styles. The final area that I proposed to focus on was based on observations of the way these groups were organised, and was to focus on communalism and commercialism. I was therefore interested in the not for profit approach in running events and the communal nature of some of the organisation, and how these were balanced against the pressures of a commercial culture in which they operated. These three areas were the starting point for this research; however, I was aware of the need to be flexible, and that these were my expectations and areas of interest, that they only served the purpose of providing a shape and focus to the study, and that they were not necessarily the areas of interest of those involved. The intention,

however, was that this investigative research would be led by the contributions of those I interacted with in these two settings in conversations and in interviews, and this proposal therefore became modified, which I shall now describe.

The degree to which participants in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance, influenced the focus of this research, is evident in how the above proposal evolved as a result of collaboration with these participants. As has been explained, interview questions were not targeted directly at these areas of interest, the intention being to encourage interviewees to talk freely about their involvement and to discuss what is important to them. However, it became clear that while there was a great deal of overlap with my own interests and what participants discussed, they did not match exactly. Biographical information for example, gave an insight into the origins of interest in these two styles of folk social dance in the UK and how this developed, and converged towards a very similar organisational and social structure. Chapter 2 covers this topic and presents a history of participation based on what present day participants understand of the recent past, and moves forward to a description of how participation is constituted at present. Chapter 3 and 4 look at how ideas important to these groups are transmitted and learned through their practices, supported by the organisational and social structure that has developed. In Chapter 3, I discuss how those involved relate their participation to the place of origin of their chosen style of music and dance, and how this is translated into practice. How participants relate their own practice to the place of origin can be seen to be negotiated within the groups, led by key participants who have firsthand experience of the place of origin, and who pass this on to others. Chapter 4 discusses the attributes of these groups in terms of participation, inclusiveness, and acceptance, for example, which are encouraged along with cooperation and generosity, which result in a strong feeling of belonging, by new and established participants alike. While in broad terms the topics of the previous chapters were covered by the original project proposal of areas of interest, the topic of Chapter 5 emerged from the research process: the theme of the experience of dance in this social context was talked about by most participants. In this Chapter, I discuss some of the perceptions of the meaning of dance to these participants and its importance in their lives. By not being prescriptive, the discussion of this experience opened up

into areas that would perhaps not have been explored otherwise, such as the intimacy of dance, and what participants gain from involvement in social dance.

It is clear from this account of how the direction and focus of the research evolved, that it was very strongly influenced by those involved in these social settings that collaborated with me in the research. However, this is not a claim that this approach has resulted in a more objective report than if they had not. It could be argued that ultimately, I have been in control of the research process and that it was therefore subject to my choices and selections. There are, however, two points at which this approach benefits the research process. The very fact that the research question is a question *of* a social setting, and is therefore a question asked from an external perspective, results in an 'us and them' division, which can be a barrier to obtaining an in depth and incisive explanation of the setting. By allowing the contributions of musicians and dancers to influence my decisions about what is important, and therefore what should be included in writing this study, I have relaxed this division and moved a long way towards addressing the conditional clause to the research question, 'for those involved'. This approach also broadened the perspective taken in the research, as is evident from the topics of discussion in Chapter 5, much of which were not anticipated. Wolcott discusses the personal and cultural meaning of questions, what is acceptable, and what can and cannot properly be brought up in conversation, referring to this as 'part of the baggage we take into the field' (Wolcott 2001; p. 56). By limiting the interview to two open questions, interviewees had the freedom to introduce subjects that I may have found difficult to introduce for fear of causing offence or being misunderstood. The discussion of intimacy and sex in Chapter 5 are examples of this, and demonstrate the fluid nature of the research in allowing the influence of those involved to contribute to its direction and focus.

Having discussed ethnographic methodology more generally, and the specific methods and perspectives adopted in this study, I shall now turn to the social settings that are the subject of this study. In the next chapter, I shall describe the context, background and extent of present day participation in Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK. This serves as the backdrop to subsequent chapters and aids in the understanding of participation in these activities, and the benefits to those involved.



## Chapter 2

### Organisation and Social Setting

This chapter will offer a detailed description and critical examination of folk social dance, which will act as a foundation for understanding subsequent discussions. To contextualise the two case studies of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance, the first section of the chapter will offer a broader introduction to folk social dance, offering an account of when recent interest in these music and dance styles developed in the UK. Secondly, I shall document the form and organisation of events in contemporary practice, draw on interviews with participants and, trace a history of both of the chosen case studies. This chapter will also highlight some of the issues that will be explored and theorised in later discussions.

#### This is Folk Social Dance – ‘no, I don’t wear a costume’

In the past, mentioning my participation in folk social dance in conversation has resulted in a variety of intriguing responses. On more than one occasion, when I have said I would be attending a folk social dance event over the coming weekend, I have been asked about my costume. On many such instances, I have been at pains to emphasise the ‘social’ in folk social dance and to describe what such a weekend involves. However, on so many of these occasions the person I was talking to found it difficult to dislodge the popular perception of folk dance as taking place only on a stage, or as street entertainment by costumed dancers in front of an audience. Having discovered that so little is known about folk social dance, it is therefore useful to draw attention to the fact that participants in folk social dance generally wear regular casual dress styles, perhaps in contravention of popular perceptions that folk dance is a costumed performance.

The idea that costumed performance is required in folk dance is often reinforced by presentations of folk dance, which in the past have, for example, been used as representations of nationhood and have become important attractions for the tourist industry of some countries such as Norway and Sweden (Eriksen 1993; Vail 2003).

An analysis that is useful in this context is advanced by Turino (2008), who puts forward the idea that real time musical performance can be construed as being either presentational or participatory. The two types of musical practice are distinguished by their different relationships to the audience—artist dichotomy, which has been brought about by the increasing commoditisation of music. In presentational performance, one active group (artist) prepares and delivers music (usually as a commodity) for another group (audience) who are not involved directly in the music making. By contrast, in a participatory performance, ‘participants and potential participants perform different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role’ (Turino 2008; p. 26).

According to Turino’s thesis, these two performance approaches differ in terms of involvement, roles, character, and intention. Participatory performance necessitates an active contribution by all those engaged in the event, through singing, clapping or playing musical instruments, or through dancing. This is considered integral to the performance, and the attention is on the involvement and interaction of all participants. This contrasts with presentational performance, where the artists are the centre of attention, and there is a distinct audience—artist separation, each having its own distinct role in the overall performance. In presentational performance, the quality of sound and motion of the artists is considered to be of primary importance, while in participatory performance these are only important to the extent that they encourage greater participation. The intention of participatory performance are therefore centred on involvement, while in presentational performance, the intention is to sustain interest. However, while dichotomies such as this are useful as a descriptive tool, they often ignore the grey areas that inevitably appear in the real world, and this approach to the analysis of performances requires closer definition according to context, such as appears in the subsequent chapters of this study. The following examples should therefore be considered as illustrative of Turino’s thesis.

Examples of presentational dance are common and recent television coverage of competitive ballroom dance in the UK and elsewhere about the world come to mind. These are an example of competitive presentations of dance that have a long history stretching back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other types of presentation dance include Ballet and Vaudeville, and in a folk context in the UK, the many types

of dances under the headings National Dance, and International Folk Dance, are examples. Turino points out that in post-industrial capitalist culture, presentational performances have achieved a high profile, largely due to the ease in which they can be commodified, and commercialised. As was discussed and demonstrated in the earlier review of literature, it is these presentational types of dance that have been the focus of academic studies in the past.

Other types of dance performance are participatory, and are often referred to as social dance. The Swing dances that became particularly popular in the 1940s and 50s, are examples of social dances, while the Céilidh, the Gaelic name for an informal social occasion that involves folk music and dance, is an example of folk social dance currently popular in the UK (cf. for example Foley 2011). Céilidhs are often an important part of many of the larger annual English folk festivals where dancing takes place, such as at Sidmouth Folk Week and the Towersey Village Festival. Here, large tents with dance floors are dedicated to Céilidh dances that are generally programmed to take place from midday to midnight every day throughout the festival. The term Céilidh is commonly understood to mean a folk dancing party with a caller, and this format has also been used, increasingly over the last ten years, for other dance styles, such as Klezmer dance, giving rise to the Klezmer Céilidh. The appeal of Céilidh dance events is that the dances are informal, and people dance in groups of six or more, with a 'caller' who stands with the musicians on a stage and calls out instructions to the dancers. No experience of the dances is needed and therefore events can be very sociable, each dance taking on the fun and appearance of an elaborate party game in which everyone is encouraged to participate. An important characteristic common to the majority of styles of folk social dance, however, is that the music they dance to is not recorded but provided by musicians who play live for the dancers. Most of these features are common to the practice of other styles of folk social dance such as Scandinavian folk social dance and Cajun and Zydeco.

Participatory folk dances are generally of a much longer duration than presentational dances; social dances regularly last three to four hours and often much longer, and there is therefore the need for participants to take regular breaks. However, although there is this fluidity between the activity of dancing, and what may be considered to be spectating, in informal social dance, dancers do not at this point

become an audience. This aspect of their participation is generally very brief, as people attend these events in order to take part. The point where a social dancer becomes a spectator, therefore, may be equated to the time out taken by a presentational dancer as a period of rest, or in order to allow other dancers to have greater involvement in the performance. Neither dancer at that point becomes part of the audience; they remain very much part of the performance. Furthermore, when dancers do take time out at a social dance, they rarely sit and watch those dancing; sitting or standing near the dance floor is generally taken as one of the signals that a person is available to dance.

In a folk setting there are a great variety of dance types and styles that can be described as social dance, with a wide variety of ethnic, social, cultural, regional and even temporal provenance. In general terms, however, there are five basic types of folk social dance (adapted from Lawson 1964; pp. 15-22).

- i. Groups or sets of four, six or eight or more dancers.
- ii. Processional dances, where couples process clockwise (usually) around the dance floor.
- iii. Chain dances, where dancers are linked by fingers, hands, or arms, or by hands or arms on or around shoulders.
- iv. Circle dances, either as individuals or in couples.

and,

- v. Couple dances, where (most often) a man and a woman dance together, and usually there is a general movement of couples in an anti-clockwise direction around the dance floor.

It is this later group, folk couple dances, that I shall be concentrating on in this study, as most of the dances in Scandinavian folk dance and Cajun and Zydeco are of this type. Examples of the types of couple dances practiced in these two styles will be discussed in a later chapter. In summary, the dances in these two styles of dance generally involve a man and a woman who dance together to live music, however,

little or no experience is needed in order to take part. Events are intended to be informal and sociable, and there is no audience, as everyone is encouraged to participate as dancers or musicians, and participants do not wear 'folk costumes'.

Before looking specifically at these two styles of dance as they are practiced in the UK, it is helpful to first look at how folk social dance practices came to be popular. This discussion will also help to clarify and support the assertion made in the explanation of the methodology used in this study, that reliable quantifiable data about the extent of involvement in these styles of dances is not available, and is difficult to obtain. This is tied in with social and technological changes that had a major impact on music and dance culture in the UK, and elsewhere, but which facilitated the development of contemporary folk music and social dance practices.

### Folk Social Dance in Contemporary UK

In the UK during the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was an unprecedented rise in interest and participation in folk social dance and the music played for it. This was not only the case for the two dance styles considered in this research, but is reported more widely from participants in many other styles including, Salsa, Contra Dance, Argentinean Tango, and European folk social dance (Kiddy 2008) to name but a few. The interest in the UK, in folk dances not originally from here is not a recent phenomenon, The Society for International Folk Dance, for example, was set up in 1946 (Sweetland 1986), and the growth of interest in the 1970s of some folk social dance styles was built on this interest. What factors led to the increased interest during the 1970s and 1980s, has not been thoroughly investigated; however, some indication can be implied by looking at the circumstances of this, and this is also supported by what folk social dancers and musicians have said in this and an earlier study (Kiddy 2008). Two developments in particular, that had a major impact on British culture more generally, can be identified as playing a significant role in stimulating this interest; an increase in availability of music categorised as 'world music', and the impact of the Internet.

Changes in the cultural consumption of music during the 1970s and 1980s, led largely by the music recording industry, made many types of music more widely

available that had previously, either only been of interest to a small number of people, or which had not been available at all. New audiences were developed which were receptive to a mood of musical exploration that this accessibility encouraged. Of particular relevance, was the creation of the marketing category known as 'World Music', in 1987 (Anderson 2000), which was the term that a group of music promoters, producers and broadcasters created in order to promote "ethnic," "folk," and "international" recordings (Sweeny 1992). The term 'world music' has been the subject of considerable debate as to its usefulness, but at the time of its creation, it was loosely defined as traditional indigenous music embracing music from all cultures, but essentially within English speaking cultures, it is *their* music and not *our* music (Rahkonen 1994). As a consequence of this promotion, however, the awareness and availability of styles of 'folk' music from elsewhere grew. In interviews and discussion, some of those who participate in folk social dance were able to identify very clearly that this increased availability of World Music and in particular free 'sampler' CDs, with magazines such as *fRoots*, introduced them to the music that they now play or dance to. Without these changes in music consumption, it is unlikely that interest in folk social dance would have grown as it did; however, developments in technology, such as the ability to reproduce digitally recorded music at low cost, also played a highly significant role.

The second factor that has led to the expansion of interest in folk social dance at this time, is the development of the Internet, whose influence on society in general has been overwhelming and all pervasive. Two areas in particular can be identified as being significant in their affect on this growth in participation in folk social dance; changes in communications and as a consequence ability to organise socially, and access to information.

Social research into the effects that the Internet has had on the organisation of individuals' social life is blurred by dissimilar definitions and points of reference, and a lack of consistent conclusions (DiMaggio et al. 2001). A study by Nie and Erbring (2000), for example, reported that frequent Internet users regularly used emails instead of the telephone, and that this had resulted in less social contact, while Lin (2001) reported online communication including email, as having an opposite effect. There is research, however, that supports the assertion by participants in folk social dance, that their use of internet communication has greatly enabled their

involvement in folk music and social dance activities. For example, the idea that small arts based interest groups, such as those involved in folk social dance, are able to sustain themselves more easily as a result of the rise in use of the Internet, is supported by sociological and behavioural research into the Internet. Such research suggests that Internet users are likely to attend a greater number of arts events, and be more generally socially active, than non-Internet users (Robinson and Kestnbaum 1999) and that Internet users have larger social networks than non-Internet users (Robinson and Godbey 2008; Hampton and Wellman 2000; Cole 2000). Katz et al, also found that increased use of the Internet resulted in a wider social environment, which 'led to many face-to-face friendships that were judged by respondents as a positive experience' (Katz et al 2001; p. 405). In addition they found that 'Internet users visit friends more, and talk with them by telephone more frequently, but that they also travel more and have fewer friends in their immediate neighbourhoods' (ibid.). The conclusions of these studies are consistent with the experiences reported by folk social dancers and musicians, in this study of Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk social dance. An earlier study of Euro dance (Kiddy 2008), also found that participants are prepared to travel, sometimes great distances, in order to take part in these activities. In particular, it has made it easier for these geographically disparate individuals and groups to organise and keep in contact with each other. The effect of ease of communication through emails, websites, and, more recently, social networking sites, has had a considerable positive impact on the social organisation of many small interest groups such as these.

In the area of access to information, the Internet has made it possible for people to find out about the music that had become available to them through the marketing of world music. The dances associated with these musics have also become easier to research through using the Internet, although it is easier to find information about certain styles of dances than others. Some folk social dance participants report using *YouTube* and similar sites that contain appropriate video as a reference point to research the music and the dances in which they have become interested. Certain music and dances may be performed on such videos; however, there is no evidence of the types of communities such as those reported in studies of on-line music learning (Salavuo 2006, 2008; Waldron 2009, 2013; Veblen and Waldron 2012).

The Internet has therefore made information about specific folk social dances more accessible, and because of effective communication, has enabled small numbers of participants, spread over a large geographical area, to organise viable events. The increase in interest and participation brought about by the Internet, also suggests that the Internet has had a positive impact on cultural participation and cultural diversity, a topic that has been debated elsewhere (cf. Castell 2002), by increasing and encouraging participation in cultural activities.

I now wish to give a history and overview of current participation in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK, and a detailed description of how participation is organised. Each dance style is treated separately in order to firmly establish it within its own context in terms of its growth and development, leading up to how participation is currently constituted. There are no written accounts of these histories, and this may be the first time that these topics have been explored. These accounts are based on the testimony of those currently involved in these two dance styles, but whatever documentary evidence these participants have drawn attention to is also explored. These stories could therefore be considered as cultural commentary, more than academic histories of these styles of folk social dance, as they are partial and the sources used are not comprehensive (De Groot 2009). However, the purpose of this study is to understand the perspective of those involved and how they conceive of the background to their involvement, rather than to provide a comprehensive or definitive reference. Following on from these accounts, the discussion moves on to consider more general points about participation, serving as a setting in order to introduce and contextualise the chapters that follow, and the benefits of participation in these social settings to those involved.

### Participation in Cajun and Zydeco Folk Music and Social Dance

#### i) Growth in Popularity

Participants interviewed in this study reported that there was a growing engagement with Cajun and Zydeco music and dance in the UK from the mid-1980s. In the UK, the two styles of music and dance are generally practiced together, but the initial



focus of this interest was on Cajun music, with Zydeco music and dance being much slower to gain popularity. However, these two styles tend to merge and often do not have any clear boundary, with many Cajun bands also playing Zydeco music, and it was perhaps another twenty years before there were bands in the UK who only played Zydeco music, and dancing in the Zydeco style gained some popularity. In the following section, I shall trace the history of this growth in interest and describe how this came about. This interest led to the establishment of a number of groups in the UK, which over time evolved into the current ad hoc arrangement of participation and practice. The basis of this history is the information gathered through interviews with participants, many of whom have maintained an interest in Cajun and Zydeco since before it gained mass appeal. The details of this evolution help to explain and build an understanding of how musicians and dancers engage with this style of dance, and how this involvement is sustained.

For many years, the home music of the disadvantaged peoples of Louisiana was overlooked, within the USA and elsewhere, and expressions of pride in their culture were limited to its practitioners within the region (Patterson 1991). Within the USA as a whole, it was only with the folk revival of the 1950s and 60s that the Cajun and Creole cultures of south Louisiana, and their corresponding music and dance, Cajun and Zydeco respectively, were popularly accepted as examples of folk culture, and interest in them was shown from outside the region. Cajun music, however, was given a huge boost, following the 1964 Newport Folk Festival, where the trio the Mamou Cajun Band were enthusiastically received (O'Connor 2000). This is credited as being a pivotal event in the history of Cajun music, that 'changed everything' (Patterson 1991; p. 6), and led to its popularity increasing and spreading widely. DeWitt discusses the spread of Cajun and Zydeco dance music to Northern California (DeWitt 1999), where it became firmly established, however, with the aid of the recording industry in search of new markets, and assisted by and broadcast on radio stations, its popularity spread internationally from the mid 1960s onward.

Jude and her husband, a couple who were actively curious about folk music generally, ran a folk club in Romford, Essex, in the mid 1960s, where they also sold records, some of which they ordered from America:

. . . sometimes we would send for things and we had no idea what they were going to be like, we were just interested to see what they were like; and we got a box set of Folkways recordings, 'Sounds of the Deep South' or something like that, I think I have got one of them here, 'American Folkways, Volume 2, Social Music'<sup>9</sup> (Jude, 30/07/12)

This album had on it several tracks by Louisiana Cajun musicians recorded in 1929 and 1931 which she '*fell in love with*' (ibid.). Jude recalls this as one of her first experiences of Cajun music, and in 1965, using the tracks from this and other similar LPs, she formed a band with some friends who also liked this 'unusual' music:

It was a Cajun Band, that was all that was played, I sang, and the others played. By the standards of the type of Cajun you have got today it was probably very limited but of course our knowledge of Cajun music was very limited . . . , [its] just that we didn't have much exposure to it, but we liked it and it was always popular, so we used to get gigs.

. . . as far as I know, it was the first Cajun band in this country, but there might well have been somebody somewhere else. I was interested in the music but I didn't know much about it, but of course communication was so much different then, we have so much information these days, in those days it was so much more difficult; and it wasn't really until 1988 . . . when I found out you could actually dance to it. (Jude, 30/07/12)

Rick, an established Cajun musician, has been playing this style of music since the 1970s:

At that time, nobody in this country had even heard about Cajun dancing, this was like, late 1970s, and people use to just sit and watch really, because we played in folk clubs mostly at that time. People would just sit and watch and then gradually people would start dancing, but nothing to do with Cajun dancing it was just jumping around, and I think probably that was the case for about 15 years . . . or a few might do some rock 'n roll things or whatever, but it was not Cajun dancing initially. (Rick, 13/08/12)

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<sup>9</sup> The Anthology of American Folk Music is a six-album compilation released in 1952 by Folkways Records (catalogue FP 251, FP 252, and FP 253), comprising eighty-four American folk, blues and country music recordings that were originally issued from 1927 to 1932.

Like Rick, many of the current participants and enthusiasts speak of Cajun music becoming generally popular in the early 1980s in the UK, and Cajun dancing in the late 1980s, which was the beginning of what was to be the height of its popularity. Phil, living in Manchester at the time, had been a fan of Country and Western music for a number of years before he became interested in Cajun music, after he heard Cajun artists on a BBC Radio2 Country and Western show:

There used to be a big Country Music festival up Wembley Arena over the Easter period. It ran for twenty three years, from '69 to '92, before I started going [to Cajun events] . . . on [BBC] Radio 2 they used to broadcast all the performances, and I think it was in '91 I was listening to it . . . and this guy come on, he's called Jimmy C. Newman. . . . and oh it was just amazing; that first time I'd ever heard that [Cajun] music; there's a little bit of country feel to it but he had an accordion . . . and I think the year after they did like, sort of a tour around the country . . . and I went seeing him with the wife at Southport, and it was incredible, and I thought 'I've got to find out more about this music'. (Phil, 24/05/12)

He enthusiastically followed this up and sought out gigs and artists, travelling the length of the country to hear them play and he too, like Jude, ordered records from a catalogue, which were posted to him from America:

So there was somebody, I think it were called Mike's Country Music Room, in Scotland, who advertised 'Bluegrass, Old Timey music and Cajun'. So I wrote to him and said, you know, what Cajun have you got? So he sent me a brochure about what Cajun was about . . . where it came from in Lafayette . . . So I sent for some L.P. s like, [from Louisiana] and they were brilliant you know . . .at the time there was nothing over here at all. (ibid)

Dancing in the Cajun style to these bands had not really taken off in the UK, and Phil remembers seeing touring bands from Louisiana who clearly felt uncomfortable playing to a seated, but appreciative audience, when they were more used to people moving to their music. In particular, he recalls going to see Cajun bands playing at *The Met* in Bury in the early 1990s:

There was like tiered seating, but there was a dance area at the front, but nobody danced and quite often the band would keep saying you know, 'Somebody dance' but nobody did . . . So quite often a band member would say, you know, would you like me to come and teach you some steps and everybody'd say yeah, and they'd ask you to form a circle and they'd actually jump off the stage, and you know, try and get you moving and two stepping and things like that. (ibid)

Alongside a growing interest in Cajun Music in the late 1980s, there were also a number of folk festivals in the UK with a focus on folk dancing, such as Sidmouth Folk Festival, now the biggest folk festival in the UK. Jude recalls her earliest experience of Cajun dance, when attending an American Old-time dance workshop at Sidmouth, in 1988, run by a group of American dancers, and which included a session on Cajun dance. There was therefore already an interest in learning these dances, and people were being taught on an informal and relatively ad hoc basis, although it is difficult to judge how widespread this interest might have been. Soon after, together with her partner, they began organising a monthly Cajun night in London:

Having gone to Sidmouth the year before but not having anywhere to dance, we decided that we would start having our own 'first Fridays'<sup>10</sup>; and one of the problems was we could get the bands, there obviously were some bands around, but people wouldn't know how to dance, and to me it was the dancing that really filled the whole Cajun experience out . . . and so I said let's do a workshop beforehand. So, that's the format that we have always had, and that seems to be a format that seems to have been picked up by other people.

. . . it is amazing how quickly it did become popular, because we had our first festival in '91, and that, I think it was a one day festival, and it started at 1 o'clock and within 15 minutes we had sold out completely . . . There was a big wave of interest in Cajun, and then I suppose from there I went to Louisiana in '91 as well. We brought some people over from there; The Savoy's, and Michael Doucet; for a few short tours, which was really good then. Because of the fact that it was very popular and we had large crowds, we could afford

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<sup>10</sup> Workshops and dances held on the first Friday of the month.

to underwrite that in a way that subsequently would have been impossible, and so we travelled around a bit with them . . . and we started doing workshops all over the place. (Jude, 30/07/12)

By the late 1980s, and early 1990s, a thriving social scene had developed in England based around Cajun music clubs, which had been set up and run both commercially and non-commercially. Research participants described that clubs in cities such as Bradford, Derby, Manchester, London, Bristol, Gloucester and Bury held regular weekly or monthly events, which are fondly remembered by many of those currently taking part in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance.

Research participants reported that one of the most popular and influential venues was *The Swamp Club* in Derby, which regularly attracted a crowd of several hundred from a very wide geographical area, and built up a considerable reputation at the time. It was remembered by many of the participants in this study:

The Swamp Club was sold out in advance every month. (Rick, 13/08/12)

The circuit used to be much, much bigger, in the late '80s it had like a heyday, and you know, you could go to the Swamp Club in Derby or somewhere like that . . . (and) you would get, like 300 or 400 people, all rocking and raving and stuff. (Kath 09/04/12)

. . . It was good, they had several rooms, and it was really good fun, they would have two bands on at once, and a lot of people went there. (Vicki 27/04/12)

She continues:

At that time, '92 I think, there were quite a few bands coming over to England playing Cajun . . . and a lot of people couldn't do it [Cajun dancing], and so we started teaching it, and went to Louisiana the February after, and spent three weeks learning to do it properly . . . and then we did quite a lot of teaching and dancing until I had children. (ibid)

There is therefore an idea of doing it right, and of learning this from the original source which are themes that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In London there were also several Cajun clubs and occasional special events when a top band visited the UK from Louisiana, which at the time, as already mentioned by Jude, would attract a large enough audience to make such a trip commercially viable. However, most of the live music was played by British bands, who like Jude and her friends, had heard recordings of Cajun music and decided that was what they wanted to play. As a musician in a popular British Cajun band that played in front of many large audiences, Rick's perspective was from the stage:

What happened is, a few people got into Cajun music; came to a lot of gigs; kept coming; got addicted to Cajun music and then thought oh, we must go to Louisiana because that's where it comes from. And when they got to Louisiana, they went to clubs and they found people doing moves to it, and so they thought that's what we should be doing . . . and some people did that, and started coming back and teaching it . . . and then slowly you would see 4 people in amongst a crowd of 600 people jumping around, you would see 4 people doing a little bit of Cajun dancing, and a month later you might see 8 people doing it, and a month later there might be 16, and that's how it worked really. (Rick, 13/08/12)

There was clearly a general feeling that the dancing at these clubs in the UK should reflect that in its place of origin, and a need to investigate this further, a topic covered in greater depth in Chapter 3. From the musicians' perspective, however, Rick was able to observe as things changed over time, and whether this change was due to a change in fashion, or because of the growing popularity of the particular style of dancing, is still debated today. Rick continues:

To me it's a double edged sword . . . (we) were playing regularly all over the country to 500 people, 600 people, with every time we played the gig was sold out in advance . . . the people who used to come for a party basically. I mean, Cajun Swamp Club used to attract Rock 'n Roll fans, Rockabilly fans, Punks, Folk fans; people who never went to any other music events would come to the Swamp Club; and when the Cajun Dance thing started, I would say that within a year, most of those other people had stopped coming, so interesting, but it went from 500 people jumping around, to 200 people doing Cajun dancing. (Rick, 13/08/12)

The consequence of this change, however, was that the rules of engagement with this style of music were redefined and the rules of participation therefore also became defined differently, without this the practice of Cajun and Zydeco in the UK could not have evolved into its present form of organisation

In the early 1990s, *The Swamp Club* in Derby produced the *Cajun Users Manual*, an events list that later developed into a small publication, much like a fanzine, based on Cajun music. Several other similar publications produced in England also became available, and one of these in particular, *The Cajun Times*, a small printed, black and white magazine which had been started in the 1990s, evolved into a quarterly, glossy magazine, known as the *Cajun Life and Times*. With a wider interest in Cajun and Creole culture and including in it music news, reviews, UK & USA gig listings, recipes and artist biographies, it was produced from July 2001, but folded in September 2003, possibly as a result of increased Internet use. The former editor of the magazine Sally, commented:

It was sent out from a mailing list free, to all those people who were interested in primarily Cajun dance. Zydeco had yet to become really popular . . . I decided to turn it into a full colour, glossy mag., and get it to pay for itself through advertising, that was the theory. (Sally, 05/01/13, by email)

This free magazine had a minimum print run of 1000 copies, and was posted out to enthusiasts and Cajun clubs and organisations in the UK, and carried advertisements for bands and suitable venues in the UK. It also carried a variety of advertisements from Louisiana, where it had hoped to gain a substantial part of its advertising revenue from the tourist market, through advertising accommodation, tours, and restaurants in Louisiana to UK Cajun enthusiasts. Both *The Cajun Times* and the *Cajun Life and Times*, like many of the Cajun clubs and festivals, were the initiative of individual Cajun music and dance enthusiasts, and grew out of their drive and energy. The former editor described what must have been a difficult enterprise:

I did everything myself, but my friend is a professional editor so she did that, and of course I used an agency for the creative stuff and printing. It was a labour of love and hard work because the bands were appalling at letting me know about the gigs, advertising was hard to get, and everyone wanted to add their sixpenny worth of criticism, without actually contributing. (ibid)

In the period since the 1990s, the popularity of Cajun music and Cajun dancing has waned considerably, and currently there are no similar publications.

## ii) Current Participation, Festivals and Events

The decline in interest in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance since the later part of the 1990s has changed the shape of participation in the UK considerably, and has had the inevitable consequence of a decline in the number of events organised. At the same time however, interest in Zydeco, has grown steadily, and although it remains less popular than Cajun, Zydeco music and dance, does now feature at all of the current festivals. For nearly a decade, two annual events in the English southwest, the Gloucester Cajun Festival and the Bristol Cajun and Zydeco Festival, have been the focal point for these styles of music and dance in the UK. Both of these festivals feature six to eight different bands over a weekend and are very well attended, with the Friday and Saturday night dances often being sold out in advance, and reaching their 200 capacity. Because of the scarcity of such events, they have become important annual festivals that many Cajun dancers feel compelled to attend.

Significant years for these festivals were 2012, when the Bristol Cajun and Zydeco Festival celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and 2013, when the Gloucester Cajun Festival, celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Gloucester Festival claims to be the longest running Cajun festival in Europe (GCC 2012), and is unusual in that it has been adopted and run by the Leisure and Culture Department of Gloucester City Council, as part of their programme of arts and cultural events. However, the festival owes its origins to the initiative of two Cajun dancers:

The festival was founded by Pat Roberts and Louis Hawkins back in 1993, inspired by a love of Cajun music and a fascination surrounding Cajun dance. (GCC 2012)

Similarly, a small team of enthusiasts organised and raised the money to fund the first Bristol festival, but subsequently it has been run by one person who organises the whole event, from planning, as much as 14 months ahead of the event, to managing the festival itself. The organisation and management of events is a topic that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.



Until recently there were also two popular and well-attended Cajun clubs in London, which were very often the chosen venues for musicians from Louisiana on their tours of Europe. In south London, there was the *Cajun Barn*, which had used various venues since the club had been started in early 2001. This was run by two Cajun enthusiasts, however, when they decided to move out of London in 2012, they also moved the club to a venue close to their new home, in Tunbridge Wells in Kent. However, in north London, there is the club *Filé Gumbo* (named after of a thick Cajun stew), which as was discussed earlier, was started in October 1989 by June and her partner, Pete. The venue for the club is Cecil Sharpe House in Camden, which is the home of the English Folk Song and Dance Society, and this was perhaps the first Cajun club in the UK, as Pete explained:

. . . so I think it is fair to say that it was myself with [June], and then we got a group of people involved who were also interested . . . (and) that was the start of the *Filé Gumbo* music club, which has been going for over 21 years. We would claim to be the first [Cajun] music and dance club in the UK, but it depends a little bit on definition. There were bands that had regular gigs, residences, before then, but I think we were the first people who said we are a club, we will book bands, different bands, organise events; rather than a band saying we have got a residency and we will turn up there every couple of weeks. So it is arguable but in that sense we were the first [Cajun] club.  
(Pete, 30/07/12)

In addition, also in north London, there is the club *Swamp Rock*, which was originally set up in 2004 with the specific intention to be a venue for Zydeco music and dance, and which similarly is run by two people. It started well but within a couple of years the numbers had declined and most recently they only hold occasional Zydeco nights, finding that Rock 'n Roll, R 'n B and Blues nights are more popular (Lucy, 07/01/13, by email).

Several local clubs outside London have also survived since the *heyday* of Cajun dancing in the 1990s, and continue to be popular, although at times attendance is low. The club *Cajun a la Fontaine*, at the Fountain Inn, located in the centre of Gloucester is one of these clubs, and has meetings once a month. It has a regular but small attendance often with dancing to recorded music, although occasionally

local musicians also play for dancing. Enthusiasts in Gloucester also organise occasional dances with live music, usually a local band, which is held in a village hall just outside Gloucester, and an annual Cajun Riverboat Cruise at the beginning of August has taken place each year since 2001, with up to 100 participants. Similarly many regular, small local events are organised in Kent, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Devon and many other places. Mike has moved house several times within the last decade, but he and some friends have organised events in Yorkshire for many years:

. . . we will do sessions and workshops and do them wherever we happened to be living. We have been here four years, they didn't happen to go particularly well here . . . but when I did them in my previous village there was a great little group built up, and they loved the social side of it, and we would go for a drink afterwards and that sort of thing; brought people together in a really special way. (Mike, 21/06/12)

In 2010, this group of friends also announced that they were planning a new festival to be held in the small town of Malton in north Yorkshire, quite a different part of the country from the south west of England that has for a long time, been the focus of Cajun dance. In March 2012, a well-organised first festival was held at an impressive new venue, the Milton Rooms, and it more than covered its costs, giving the organisers a firm foundation for the planning of future festivals. Geoff, one of the main organisers for the event, told me that their vision over the next five years is to re-establish the larger audiences that were common in the 1990s, in order to attract some of the high profile bands from Louisiana, but he added that this is aspirational:

. . . but as I say, just one band you looking about £8000, so I think maybe that [this ambition] is a bit optimistic. You know; it depends on the band and suchlike, I mean, you know, the cheapest flight is about 600 quid return. If you have got seven people in a band that's a lot of bloody money, that's apart from the fee and their accommodation, and how do they get around, and then you've got other stuff that they won't bring with them . . . (Geoff, 17/06/12)

At this event, participants were surprised to hear that tickets were available for sale for another new festival that had been quietly planned, and was to be held in the Shropshire countryside later in the year. This was a more conventional type of

music festival, a rural location, involving camping in a field, Portaloos, a large Yurt<sup>11</sup>, and a local village hall, a departure from the Cajun festivals of the last ten years or more, but part of a growing trend for niche festivals in the UK (Anderton, 2008). Fewer than a hundred people attended this low budget festival in 2012, other festivals were held in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and the organisers are now confident that this has become an annual event.

There have been a number of small Cajun and Zydeco music events staged in England in recent years which is suggestive of something of a revival of interest in this form, however, the sustainability and economic viability of these is questionable. In March 2011, for example, a Cajun and Zydeco, *Louisiana Night* was held on a Friday in Cardiff. This event was organised by a musician who plays Cajun and Zydeco music, and was expanded and better attended when it was held in 2012. This event attracted much of its audience after being promoted at other events, and there was also a large attendance of participants from Holland who had come to see the Dutch band who were one of the two bands playing. In 2013, however, the event was cancelled due to problems over booking the venue, and the organiser's ambition to establish this as a full weekend, annual event appears to have lost momentum. An unsuccessful attempt was also made to revive a once busy Cajun club in Litchfield in 2012, by organising a programme of occasional one-day events involving daytime workshops with an evening dance. The numbers attending these events, however, were relatively small, and one of these events had to be cancelled due to poor ticket sales. The question remains open as to whether this upsurge in the number of events reflects a true revival of interest in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance in the UK that can be sustained. It may be significant, however, that an announcement was made at the end of 2012, that one of the top Cajun bands in Louisiana, Steve Riley & The Mamou Playboys, were scheduled to tour the UK and Europe during July and Aug 2013 (Cajun UK, 2012a). This may indicate that such tours have again become financially viable, as few prominent artists have played tours in the UK for a number of years.

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<sup>11</sup> A Yurt, is a large circular tent of canvas (originally of felt or skins) on a collapsible framework, originating from nomads in Mongolia, Siberia, and Turkey. Yurts are increasingly popular as temporary structures at outside festivals in the UK as an alternative to a marquee.

In addition to these regular events, there have also been irregular one-off parties and celebrations involving live music and dance, which have been organised by Cajun and Zydeco participants to celebrate occasions such as birthdays or weddings. UK bands that are currently playing at the regular Cajun festivals are usually hired for these events, and like the regular festivals, people are prepared to travel great distances to attend. These are often organised like small festivals, but although these are private parties, there is generally an open invitation to Cajun and Zydeco participants, and being such a small social group the person holding the party is usually known by other enthusiasts. A full weekend event of Cajun and Zydeco music and dance was organised in 2012, for example, to celebrate a longstanding participant's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, with five live bands playing over the weekend. This was also attended by his friends from attending Jive and Salsa dances in his local area, and although the music played was Cajun, because of these social contacts, a variety of dance styles were evident on the dance floor.

Although the numbers of people involved in Cajun and Zydeco dance events may be relatively small, there are many enthusiasts willing to organise and there is sufficient energy and enthusiasm for events and activities that participants can be busy throughout the year. In the next section, I wish to discuss some of the components which make up the organisation of participation in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance in the UK. Such details deal very much with the *nuts and bolts* of participation, but they demonstrate that some clear choices are made by organisers and participants about how this participation should be constructed. These choices, by implication, reflect some of the ideas and attitudes that are prevalent among participants, and this serves as a good reference point for understanding their involvement and for the discussion in later chapters.

### iii) The Framework of Involvement.

For the final section of this description of Cajun and Zydeco music and social dance in the UK, I shall discuss key aspects of how those involved organise their participation. The choices concerning the organisation of practice are not only important to how the framework of participation is shaped, but also inform us about the ideas engrained in the outlook of participants. The choice of the type venue for events, for example, and the ways in which information about events and activities is

accessed, is indicative of the ideas and attitudes of those within it. This follows the notion of musicking, discussed in the introduction to this thesis as the verb 'to music', and the idea that everything associated with the doing of music is important in understanding the social setting of music (Small 1998). I shall therefore begin by briefly discussing the venues currently used for Cajun and Zydeco events and activities, and how information is disseminated that enables participation, before going on to discuss more generally the framework for involvement in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance.

The venues used for Cajun and Zydeco events tend to be large public buildings or buildings owned by charities in urban areas that were purpose built as entertainment or dance venues. There is therefore very little involved in setting up a Cajun and Zydeco social dance event, and what needs to be done is generally taken care of by the venue owner. The venue owners often also provide food and refreshments for sale to participants, although in an urban areas a variety of options are also on hand away from the venue. Information about local accommodation is usually available from event organisers and in these locations, a variety of these options exist. Halls owned by the local Council in particular, are often affordable, well maintained, and provide the type of floor suitable for dancing. Although it has not always been the case, there seems to be a preference to choose these types of venues, rather than commercial establishments such as, for example, nightclubs or hotels. Halls with a sprung dance floor, specifically constructed for social dancing, and a suitable stage, such as the halls at the Gloucester Guildhall Arts Centre, and the Milton Subscription Rooms at Malton, are greatly appreciated and valued by Cajun and Zydeco musicians and dancers. In most cases the selected venues have a small or medium sized dance floor, and a bar area which also serves food prepared on the premises. Alcohol and dancing do not mix well, and so bar managers looking to cover their costs can be disappointed, while bar staff may be surprised by the constant demand for tap water by the dancers; often jugs of water are left on the bar for participants to help themselves.

Cajun and Zydeco events in the UK are promoted chiefly through printed flyers that are distributed at Cajun and Zydeco events although the Internet is also used as an additional means of promotion. Each of the Cajun and Zydeco festivals in the UK

has its own web site<sup>12</sup>, and most include an archive of pictures of past events. Information and tickets are only available through these websites, although transactions are most often conducted by post. Festival promoters have also developed email lists for sending out notifications of their next event, and these lists are usually event specific and never used for advertising or any other purpose. Other types of folk social dance styles, such as Euro dance, often use their email lists to pass on information about other events of potential interest to those recipients on their lists. This type of information sharing is absent in Cajun and Zydeco circles, and this may be due to the existence of one very comprehensive website called *Cajun UK*, whose home page states:

The objective of this site is to raise awareness of the UK Cajun and Zydeco music and dance scene, and attempts to provide a definitive list of all Cajun and Zydeco gigs and dance classes in the UK and Eire. (CajunUK 2012b)

The site owner set up the site in 2000 as a guide for fellow Cajun and Zydeco dancers and musicians. He states:

It is not a very sophisticated site but it does the job, and is widely used by Cajun and Zydeco fans to obtain information about gigs and dance classes. (Paul, Jan 2012, by email)

Up to date information and news is posted on the site by organisers of festivals, together with signposting to interesting Cajun related sites on the Internet. A national event guide is updated weekly, and includes information about tours by overseas artists visiting the UK. A free messaging board includes discussion threads and announcements, but this appears to be used by few participants. The organisation of car shares, where participants wish to arrange sharing transport to a forthcoming event, may also be organised through the messaging board. The web site also has a section describing a brief history of the origins of Cajun and Zydeco, and several pages of useful links to other websites, and contacts for venues. There is also a link to *365 Radio* (365 Radio 2012), a website that has links to eleven radio

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<sup>12</sup> For example: The Yorkshire Cajun and Zydeco Festival, <http://maltonyorkshire.co.uk/yorkshire-cajun-zydeco-festival-2015/>, The North Wales Cajun and Zydeco Festival, <http://www.northwalescajun.co.uk/>, Bristol Cajun and Zydeco Festival, <http://bristolcajunfestival.com/>.

stations based in Louisiana that broadcast Cajun and Zydeco music over the Internet, some of which are free but others can be listened to by subscription.

In some areas where there has been much activity in the past and clubs were formed, such as in Kent and in north Wales, websites were created to inform about events and activities in the local area. The website that covers the Kent area, in south east England is a typical example:

Kent Cajun is a website set up in about 2006, when there was a lot of interest in the area, which has since died out, originally like Cajun UK, to inform enthusiasts of events and activities in the area. There have in the past been a number of bands playing Cajun Music in the area, and the website served to provide information about gigs and events that they were playing at, as well as dance workshops that were being run in the area. There are no longer Cajun bands in the area, although regular monthly workshops are held by specific dance tutors in the area and information about these is put on the website. (Kath, 09/11/12, by email)

While in the past these sites may have made a valuable contribution to Cajun and Zydeco in a particular area, most are currently only maintained in a minimal way, but still provide a valuable service to a small number of enthusiasts, and serve as a focal point for initial enquiries by people new to Cajun and Zydeco.

Without a publication like *Cajun Life and Times*, it is difficult to estimate how many Cajun bands there are currently. The editor of this magazine estimated that there were about approximately 33 active bands when it was published between mid-2001 and the end of 2003. *Cajun UK*, however, lists 34 Cajun bands currently playing regularly throughout the UK and Ireland (January 2012). Neither of these figures, however, is an accurate reflection of the total extent, or is representative of the level of activity in Cajun and Zydeco bands at that time. Many of the current bands survive through playing regularly in pubs, and most often, there is no Cajun dancing at these events. Playing for a broader audience also means that these bands play a wide range of Americana music styles, in particularly the Blues and R 'n B, as well as their own material, and so there are now very few bands that only play Cajun and Zydeco music.

Cajun evening events usually start with a dance workshop for about an hour before the live music begins, and as June mentioned, this has become the accepted pattern since the beginning of the 1990s. The workshops not only introduce newcomers to Cajun dance, but also help improvers, and encourage a sociable environment. Weekend festivals often follow a similar programme by alternating workshops and live music, with longer workshops held in the mornings and afternoons, and dances to live music at lunchtime and in the evenings.

It is rare for there to be music workshops at Cajun festivals, however, the dance workshops are often staggered with music sessions, so there is the chance for musicians and dancers to attend both. Music sessions fulfil a similar purpose to music workshops in other music and dance styles, but are informal gatherings where there is an open invitation to musicians of any level of ability, and where there is the opportunity for informal learning and practice. Unlike music workshops, however, non-musicians often sit and enjoy the music. As well as these programmed music sessions, which are often led by several members of one of the Cajun bands, spontaneous music sessions happen throughout the festival, usually in the bar or an adjacent area, and late night sessions are sometimes held on Friday and Saturday nights at some venues.

While the story behind the growth of interest in Cajun and Zydeco in the UK was strongly influenced by commercial interests, this contrasts considerably with that of Scandinavian folk music and social dance. As will become apparent, however, there are also number of similarities, and it is these contrasts and similarities that will lead to a greater understanding of the significance of participation. The background and circumstances that led to there being organised participation in Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK are the subject of the next section.

### Participation in Scandinavian Folk Music and Social Dance

#### i) Growth of Interest

There has been an interest in the UK, in the folk dances of Scandinavia, certainly since the middle of the twentieth century and possibly from before this. The professional body, The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing opened its National



Dance Faculty in 1952 (ISTD 2004), and dances from Sweden have been a strong component of their programme, and are covered in the current National Dance syllabus (ISTD 2011). In addition and less formally, the Society for International Folk Dance (SIFD) was founded in 1946, when there was a general growth of interest in folk dancing in the UK and in many other countries (Lieghton 1986). Several of those interviewed, such as Sue, were introduced to these styles of dance through their parents' involvement in SIFD weekend events during the 1950s and 1960s:

My parents danced and so I was taken as a child, and went to the sort of events run by the Society for International Folk Dancing . . . I must have liked it, and I did dance, and people; everyone was very nice about having a little person who didn't really fit in with the height and the whole look of it, dancing. And I just carried on, and at some stage I must have got bitten by the bug in a way myself (Sue, 02/02/12)

Those whose initial interest was in the music, however, spoke of the difficulty of being able to find recordings of Scandinavian folk music in the UK during the 1960s and 70s, a situation only slightly improved later with the marketing of the 'World Music' genre in the 1980s. Some enthusiasts visited Sweden and Norway, others reported having worked in Scandinavian countries, and developed an interest in the folk music while there, and maintained that interest on returning to the UK. Current participation in the folk social dances of Scandinavia, however, owes its origins largely to a small number of people around the country, whose interest was in folk fiddle music, and who having played Irish and Scottish music which had been popular for a long time, wanted to explore new areas and challenges. The fiddle playing of Scandinavian folk music although musically related to Irish and Scottish, was different enough rhythmically and melodically to attract their interest, although written music was always very hard to find. When Steven became interested in playing folk music in the late 1970s, he had not played his violin since he was at school and had to search for material to learn from:

. . . so I sort of had to relearn how to play the fiddle and, I got some books and tapes and things, which were I think initially Irish, because that was what was available really . . . and I would go and listen to people playing as well . . . I

did sort of try and find out about the music from there [Scandinavia], so I did get hold of a couple of records, but there wasn't very much available (Steven, 19/10/11)

A similar story was reported by those who had more recently become involved in this style of playing. In the late 1980s, Jill and a few of her friends in London, were part of the trend associated with the newly accessible 'world music', and were part of an audience engaged in the mood of musical exploration at the time. They also played violin and discovered a particular tutor who specialised in teaching traditional styles of fiddle playing, and joined his classes:

. . . he taught a term of Irish, then a term of English then a term of Scottish and then American and then Eastern European and then he does a sort of cycle . . . because he does it all by ear, and for me it was just another world, so different from classical . . . but one Sunday he did Scandinavian . . . in the meantime I had been buying CDs, Eastern European, Márta Sebestyén and Scottish and Irish and going to concerts and music and starting to become enriched by this music. (Jill, 01/02/12)

Scandinavian folk music, was practiced in the UK by only a very few isolated individuals, written or recorded music that would be useful to musicians was very hard to come by, and Scandinavian folk dancing, mostly took the form of presentational style performance and practice. In addition, before the widespread use of the internet, there was not the infrastructure in place for those who shared this interest to network with one another or to coordinate their activities.

Only when a cohort of enthusiastic musicians had mastered the nuances of Scandinavian folk music, were dancers able to become involved with dancing socially to live music. There appears to have been a degree of synchronicity in the desire of both musicians and dancers that was waiting for the opportunity to be realised, and this was illustrated in conversations with those who had participated for the longest time. Musicians who were playing Scandinavian folk dance music, wanted to do something more than practice tunes, or play to appreciative audiences in concerts. Those with experience of dancing in this style through involvement in International folk dance, saw the opportunity to dance more often, and in a more relaxed and sociable environment.

Tom was involved in the beginnings of organised interest in Scandinavian folk social dance in the UK, and recounts how this came about:

We had listened to a lot of music from all over, she [his partner] collected huge amounts of LPs and subsequently CDs from all over Europe and beyond. We often had music playing in the house, and we were taking a particular liking to Swedish music, and then she saw advertised a dance course in Sweden, aimed mainly for Americans, taught in English, but taught by expert Swedes, (and) decided to go. (Tom, 07/02/12)

He adds:

At the end of that first course in Sweden, we talked to a couple who had been among the teachers there, and suggested that they might like to come and teach at the next International Folk Dance Summer school, that we were having in York, . . . and they came and introduced enough people to, enough Polska and Gammeldance, that we had a nucleus that we could start a little group in London which has been running ever since. (ibid)

At this time, enthusiasts were scattered about the country and there was no coordinated activity of any type. It is commonly asserted, however, that a pivotal event which led to the organisation of interest in the UK was when two successful events of Scandinavian music and dance were held in York in 1989 and 1990. This showed that there was a significant interest in Scandinavian folk music and dance, and this drew the attention of the organisers of the *Yorkshire Dales Workshops*. These had been started several years earlier, with the idea to provide long residential weekends of teaching in particular folk music styles, of which there was not very much at the time. Building on the interest shown in York, an annual weekend of workshops on the theme of Scandinavian folk music and social dance was started in 1991. Steven attended the first fiddle workshops, and found himself getting more and more involved:

I saw an advert in the [local Community centre], for a course in Swedish fiddle music over in Yorkshire. I knew nothing about the organisation, X was running it, but it turns out that she had been living over in Scandinavia and she had studied traditional music there . . . they formed a company, a not for

profit company, and asked a few people, including me if they wanted to be Directors . . . we sort of built it up into quite a long event, a four day event. (Steven, 19/10/11)

The *Yorkshire Dales Workshops* provided an opportunity for musicians and dancers to attend an annual weekend of intensive learning of Scandinavian tunes and dances. Fiddle players in particular contributed to a growth of interest in the music, as those who could play Scandinavian folk tunes, contributed to folk sessions in pubs and folk clubs, and this drew the attention of dancers, in particular those who has danced to this music at SIFD events. A group of dancers based in London, also got together to hold regular meetings, after they had attended the events in York, and still meet on a regular basis, and call themselves *Scandia*. The *Yorkshire Dales* workshops continued to be well attended through the 1990s, reflecting a growing interest, primarily in Scandinavian folk music, but also dance, and for a number of years attracted sponsorship from the cultural section of the Norwegian embassy:

. . . we used to get money from the Norwegian Government, via the embassy, to the tune of several thousand pounds to run the Scandinavian Festival, for about three or four years in a row, and then we got smaller amounts for a few years, but now we don't get anything. (Steven, 19/10/11)

Scandinavian folk social dance was increasingly introduced at festivals like those held at Kinnersley Castle in Herefordshire, which had previously concentrated on European and mostly French folk social dance. The popularity of Scandinavian dance gained much from its association with these styles of folk social dance, and connection to another folk social dance style provided a model for organising Scandinavian folk social dance events. In 2008, the two people who had started organising the *Yorkshire Dales Workshops* handed over this responsibility to a small team led by the organiser of another similar event, she commented:

. . . they announced that they weren't going to do it ever again it was going to stop, so I said erm, I don't think this is a good idea (laughs) because you have built up a lot of interest, the interest is growing I think. More and more people are getting some basic expertise in dancing, and they are getting more and more interested in learning more, and I think this is a really bad time to stop

these Scandinavian events. I will run it for three years, and that's all and then at the end of three years we have to decide what to do next (Anon.)

The *Yorkshire Dales Workshops* weekends were moved to a new venue in North Yorkshire, and this event is now called *Scandimoot*, and these weekends have grown increasingly popular in recent years.

## ii) Current Participation, Festivals and Events

*Scandimoot* has become the most significant annual event in the calendar for enthusiasts of Scandinavian folk music and dance, and attracts participants from all over the country. It is a four-day long, weekend event, of intensive music and dance workshops for all levels of ability, with Scandinavian folk social dances in the evenings. It is therefore not a festival in the conventional sense, but maintains the original emphasis of the *Yorkshire Dales Workshops* which was to focus on learning. Each year a different regional style or theme is chosen, and up to six musicians and dance tutors from Scandinavia, who specialise in that theme, are employed to teach the workshops<sup>13</sup>. On the Saturday night of the weekend, a short concert and dance display that is open to the public is put on in the local town followed by a dance. The hiring and bringing in of musicians from Scandinavia, clearly involves considerable financial risk and expense, however, these costs are helped considerably by its sister event held in Tideswell.

An annual weekend festival of Scandinavian folk music and social dance is held at Tideswell, in Derbyshire, and was originally set up by an enthusiast who wanted to get together with friends to share their interest in Scandinavian folk music and dance. It is common for smaller events like this to be started and organised by one or two enthusiastic individuals who are interested either as musician or dancer. Events generally have a programme of workshops during the day, with an equal emphasis on dance and music workshops, and a social dance during the evening. The Tideswell festival is much more like a conventional type of festival, in that the aim is for it to be a relaxing weekend, with the programme organised and contributed to by those who attend. A modest fee is charged for the weekend and it is run on a

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<sup>13</sup> In 2011, the theme was Norwegian folk music and dance, in 2012, the theme was Swedish folk music and dance, and in 2013, the Gangar and Springar dances of Norway.

budget, with the funds raised used to subsidise the costs of *Scandimoot*. Another event with a similar origin is a small evening dance held in Bristol in December each year, which includes a bring-and-share buffet and is funded by donations made by those who attend. Bristol is also unique in the UK as it has its own Spelmanslag, a fiddle based folk ensemble of about ten members and modelled on the many that exist in rural areas of Sweden, and they provide the music each year at this event. The Bristol Spelmanslag meet locally, every two months and also play at events for the local Swedish community and for parties. Although both the events at Tideswell and the Bristol were originally set up for a small group of friends, they do have an open invitation to anyone with an interest in Scandinavian folk music and social dance. Like the events held at Kinnersley Castle, there has been an increasing trend towards including Swedish dance at events that have previously focused on Euro dance. An annual festival held in a village hall in Hathersage in Derbyshire, and the meetings of Lancaster Eurodance, a folk social dance evening held monthly at a Community Arts Centre, have followed this trend. This is a pattern which is consistent, to a greater or lesser extent, with other similar European folk social dance groups around the country.

The monthly meetings of Scandia in north London, which Tom was instrumental in starting, have already been mentioned, and he has seen interest in London grown considerably since this, he commented:

I mean you have got enough people who can get together to play Nickelharpa now, enough people to get together and play Hardangar fiddle, and a once a month music session. (Tom, 07/02/12)

The monthly Scandinavian music session he mentions, held in a south London pub has been growing in popularity and recently has moved in order to accommodate the numbers that attend. The only monthly event organised outside London, which is exclusively for Scandinavian folk music and social dance, is at Ketton in Rutland. These events started in 2010, and are most often well attended, drawing musicians and dancers from a wide area, with several travelling a considerable distance to attend. The evening social dances are generally preceded by workshops, and occasional workshops on specific topics are also held at Ketton at weekends. These

are the main groups in the UK that specialise in Scandinavian folk music and social dance and who meet mostly on a monthly basis.

### iii) The Framework of Involvement

In this final section of the description of participation in Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK, I shall again follow the notion of musicking (Small 1998) as described earlier, in discussing aspects of how those involved organise their participation. By looking at the choices that participants make concerning the components of practice that combine to realise these events and activities, it is possible to learn about the people who take part in this dance style. This background also creates the context for the discussions that will be the subject of later chapters.

The Scandinavian social dance events currently held in the UK are usually not very large, mostly involving fewer than 80 participants, and the majority of the venues are small village or community halls or similar public buildings in rural locations. These venues are often used for a variety of functions and activities for their community, from wedding receptions to Day Nurseries and club meetings, and welcome support from outside their community, and the additional income and interest in using the hall. The logistics of running an event at such a multi-functional venue, however, can be complex and there is a great deal involved in setting up an event for social dance. Quite apart from creating the right type of ambience, with batik wall hangings and softer lighting for example, sound equipment and sometimes lighting for the musicians has to be assembled, and tables and chairs arranged. These venues are most often owned by the local Council, although the two larger events at Kinnersley Castle and at the Dalesbridge Centre are an exception to this. Kinnersley Castle is a large privately owned Tudor house on the Welsh borders, while *Scandimoot* is held at Dalesbridge, an outdoor recreation centre in the Yorkshire Dales. *Scandimoot* requires several large rooms for the many workshops, and also makes use of a local village hall for dance workshops and evening dances. Evening events such as the clubs at Ketton and the Scandinavian music session in London make use of rooms in pubs.

Due to their rural locations, options for accommodation, meals and refreshments are often limited. Attending Scandi festivals and events, often involves finding

accommodation and in some cases this can cost as much as the event itself. Half of Scandi events are held over a weekend or longer, with accommodation optionally provided at the venue, local camping sites, bed and breakfast, or similar accommodation. At some festivals held in small halls, 'indoor camping' is common, where space is made available for participants to sleep in sleeping bags on the floor. Camping is often a popular choice by participants at all times of the year, as it considerably reduces the cost of attending a festival. Stewards are usually engaged at these festivals, as nearly all of the venues have a small kitchen and this is most often used to its maximum capacity in providing meals and refreshments for festival participants, included in the ticket price. Stewards volunteer to organise cooking and many other activities that are essential to the smooth running of the event, such as lighting and sound, where these are used. These stewards are usually able to negotiate a concessionary price for the weekend, in some cases their work paying for their whole attendance and this is in particular aimed at those on limited or low incomes

There have been no publications in the UK dedicated to Scandinavian folk social dance, and it rarely has coverage in more general publications, making information hard to come by. In the past information about events was passed on by flyers distributed at similar festivals and events and by word of mouth. Increasingly however, the Internet has become the main source of information about forthcoming events through the use of emailing lists and social networking sites. The names of those people attending an event are added to the list, but participants at other events can also request information by signing a sign-up sheet. Only the two larger festivals have dedicated websites, and this has resulted in participants from other European countries often attending the UK festivals. Event organisers are happy to use their email lists to share information about other dance events or concerts of interest to participants, and visits to the UK by Scandinavian musicians. However, there is no central reference point for information or coordination of participation.

Participants frequently post videos taken at Scandinavian folk social dance events in the UK on YouTube, and these join similar videos taken at some of the many music and dance festivals in Sweden and Norway. Much of the information about events held in Scandinavia can be obtained from sites on the Internet, although only a few of these have information in English. Very little information about these festivals



appears on sites to do with events in the UK, and Internet links to information about them are not widely circulated by UK participants, even though participants from other European countries, such as France, Germany and Belgium do often attend events in the UK.

The festivals and events held in Sweden and Norway are a popular attraction for many UK Scandinavian enthusiasts, who arrange their holidays in order to attend these festivals, joining American, Danish, German, French and Belgian, dancers and musicians. A Scandinavian event flier in 1999 refers to an event in the UK as preparation for the summer festivals held in Sweden, the assumption being that attending these events is something to aspire to. However, each year a small group of British dancers get together and travel across for the annual dance festivals held in the Dalarna region of central Sweden. Many UK musicians and dancers also visit other areas of Sweden and Norway to attend festivals, and workshops in dance or their chosen instrument. This aspect of participation will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Financially, Scandinavian folk social dance events are sustained through self-funding, which affects decisions made about the venues and their location, the tutors and musicians on the programme, and the way that the event is organised. Event organisers do seek out sponsorship for their events, as mentioned earlier the *Yorkshire Dales Workshops*, did for a time have sponsorship from the Norwegian Embassy, and a few individual events have in the past had the support of The National Lottery fund, but sponsorship has been very difficult to find. Ticket sales for an event are therefore generally the only income generated, and usually each festival aims to cover its costs and no more. Where a surplus is generated, it is usually carried over for use in planning the next year's festival or spent on things that would improve future events, such as buying cooking equipment for catering for large numbers. Tickets are usually ordered by post or over the Internet, and can be reserved by paying a deposit, or paid for in full, although many people choose to pay at the event and events are rarely sold out and organisers are generally very accommodating. The cost of events and festivals varies considerably, with the specialist weekend of workshops at *Scandimoot* costing £100 for a full festival

ticket<sup>14</sup>, not including accommodation and meals; to £25 for a smaller event which may include free indoor camping and meals; the evening at Bristol asks for a voluntary contribution of £5 which goes towards paying for the hire of the hall.

In common with most folk social dance styles, festivals have music and dance workshops during the day and a social dance during the evening. Music workshops are most often very well attended at festivals while dance workshops tend to vary in popularity. Both music and dance tutors in most cases are UK enthusiasts who have a great deal of experience of dancing or playing in Scandinavia, and most often have attended music or dance courses there. Generally, only the two larger festivals can support the cost of bringing in specialist dance tutors from Scandinavia. Historically, Scandinavian folk dance music is fiddle based, and so music workshops are especially popular with violin players, although other musical instruments are also welcomed. There are very few permanent bands in the UK that play music for Scandinavian social dance at festivals, although there are a number of well known solo musicians and those who play in a duet. One couple in particular have been playing this style of music since before it became popular in the UK and are often relied upon to play at many of the events organised. At most events nearly half of those who attend are musicians, and they provide the music for dancing, often in the form of an impromptu Spellmanslag, and generally musicians do not get paid for playing for the evening dances.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described in detail the practices and current level of participation in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk social dance in the UK, and early development of interest in them offers some significant contrasts. An interest in Cajun and Zydeco social dancing, for example, developed out of Cajun and Zydeco music becoming fashionable in the USA following the 1964 Newport Folk Festival. This was exploited commercially through recordings, concerts and clubs, and this vogue spread to the UK. This commoditised, presentational performance of music (Turino 2008) became a vehicle for a variety of social activities at clubs, pubs

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<sup>14</sup> Here the cost of the festival does not cover accommodation, camping on the site is an extra £5.50pp/pn, or meals at the festival, which would cost an extra £45.

and concerts, and stimulated musicians to copy this style of music at informal get-togethers and sessions. A growing section within this large audience, however, became interested in the dancing that is associated with the music, and learned these dances by either visiting Louisiana, or from others who had visited there. Participation in Cajun and Zydeco social dancing therefore grew out of, and was tied to, the presentational performance of Cajun and Zydeco music.

While interest in Cajun and Zydeco music spread commercially worldwide in the late 1960s, interest in Scandinavian folk dance developed much earlier. An interest in the folk dances of Scandinavia was also part of a wider scholarly interest and aesthetic appreciation of International Folk Dance, which developed in Europe in the 1930s, and continued into the 1950s. Within this larger grouping of folk dances from other countries, Scandinavian folk dance was practiced as a presentational performance of dance (*ibid.*), which included the costumed performance of choreographed dance routines to a paying audience. It is the prevalence of this type of presentation of folk dance in the past, which leads to many of the misconceptions encountered concerning folk dance. Participation in Scandinavian folk social dance therefore grew out of the presentational performance of these dances, as features of cultural entertainment and education.

Fashion and interests change, however, and neither Cajun and Zydeco, or Scandinavian dance styles, have been able to sustain their popularity and consequentially, their association with presentational performance. Both of these styles of dance have a background as social dance; Cajun and Zydeco has always been practiced as social dance in Louisiana, and was experienced as such by those who visited there, and the majority of the original dances that the Scandinavian folk dance presentations were based on, are also folk social dances. Those who were particularly enthusiastic about these styles of dance have therefore turned to organising participatory or social dances, in order to continue to practice these styles of dance.

The practice of these two styles of folk social dance in the UK, therefore have very different origins and have consequently evolved in very different ways, but both have been subjected to the same influences. Two social and cultural changes in the 1980s in particular, were very influential on the change of direction for these styles of

dance. Firstly, interest in these styles of folk social dance benefited immensely from the increased accessibility of music from other countries, and the liberalising of music tastes encouraged through the promotion of 'world music' by certain parts of the music industry. The second is the increased access to information and communication abilities brought about by the development of the Internet, and its effect on organisational capabilities in the social arena, which enabled small numbers of enthusiasts spread over a large area to come together for social dance events.

These changes in practice support Turino's notion of the commoditisation of performance that results in performance being constructed as either presentational or participatory (Turino 2008). A prerequisite of commoditisation is the involvement of a significant number of people, which must include all of those concerned with the *doing* of these dance styles, and according to the notion of musicking (Small 1998), in the past this would have been significant. In the period up to the 1980s, those involved would have included, not only those who took part in dancing, but also all of those who made this possible, for example; managers and staff at large venues, Cajun music promoters, and seated audiences entertained by Scandinavian folk dancers. The decline in interest in these dances, however, has meant that the numbers of those currently involved is relatively small, and therefore their practice can no longer be organised commercially or as a business.

Motivated by the desire of participants to continue dancing, alternative ways to manage these activities have been organised, and these are built on an enthusiasm for these styles of dancing. Participatory practices have taken over from presentational practices, organised as self-contained, self-funded and not-for-profit, and almost wholly dependent on the enthusiasm and commitment of an individual, or small group of individuals as organisers. This way of organising the practice of folk social dance is very different to how activities were managed in the past, and it has resulted in a distinctive style of organisation where *participatory* has come to mean more than involvement in the dance alone.

The organisation of these participatory practices is therefore by enthusiasts for enthusiasts, and being run on a not-for-profit basis is particularly important to those involved. This change of emphasis has a number of implications that impact on the

management of events, and on the relationships formed between participants. The management of events as not-for-profit activities impacts broadly upon decisions made about how events should be run, with the primary concern that events should be affordable and sustainable. The choice of the type of venue used, and the reliance on dance and musical skills being taught by people who live in the UK are examples of this. The minimal marketing and advertising employed is not an oversight, or a sign that the groups involved in these practices are insular or unwelcoming, but is a reflection that their organisation is free from the necessary self-promotion of a profit making venture. Importantly, however, the organisation of practice motivated by enthusiasm for the music and dance style rather than for profit, results in relationships being formed that are experienced as greatly beneficial to those involved. Organisers for example, can be identified with as fellow enthusiasts taking part as fully as other participants do, which engenders a sense of affinity and inclusion, which in turn can be empowering as other participants become involved in organising. There is therefore also a commitment to the practice of a particular style of music and dance, which is supportive and cooperative, rather than competitive. This way of organising is an extension of a general notion of participation that originates in the participatory nature of the dance itself, and is perceived of by those involved as having a number of benefits to those who take part. These benefits give participation its meaning and significance, and these will be discussed and expanded upon in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The first of these that I shall discuss concerns how those who take part in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk social dance groups in the UK, perceive their relationship to practices in the place of origin of these dance styles, and how this forms the basis for negotiation and empowerment.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Folk Social Dance Practice**

Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian are examples of styles of folk music and dance that originate from outside the UK, but that have been adopted here by musicians and dancers who have no clear connection with their place of origin. In order to confirm how these styles should be practiced therefore, participants seek reference points that can be used to inform their practice in the UK. The focus of discussion in this chapter is how these reference points are used, and what other influences come into play to determine the practice of these social dance styles in the UK.

Firstly, the discussion will look at research material relating to travel, as evidence of how participants in the UK go about finding reference points, which influence how they conduct their practice. These participants employ various strategies in order to connect with practice in the place of origin and to get closer to the real thing elsewhere, and use these experiences as reference points to inform their own practice. The significance of this knowledge to those involved and how it is used is also looked at, along with its relevance to an individual's place within this group. This discussion reveals two distinct approaches to finding reference points for learning and teaching, which impact on practice more generally both in the place of origin and in the UK. Secondly, therefore, these styles are examined within an historic context in order to explain how this may have come about, and what the ramifications have been. Thirdly, current practice of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance are looked at in order to analyse the implications of the approach adopted, revealing a process of negotiation that determines practice and influences the development of these styles of folk social dance.

In the previous chapter, it was noted that travel is important to participation in both of these groups, as participants often travel considerable distances within the UK in order to attend the small number of regular events that are scattered about the country. Travel outside the UK is also important to many, firstly in order to attend festivals in Europe, but particularly travel to the place of origin of their favoured dance style. The following section looks at how travel is used by participants in

Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance as a means of getting closer to 'the real thing', and in order to find points of reference that may be used to inform their practice in the UK.

### Reference points for practice - Learning to do it properly

Many of the research participants placed a central emphasis on the importance of how of these dance styles are practiced in their place of origin. In the previous chapter, Rick described the rise in interest in Cajun and Zydeco in the UK at the end of the 1980s, and explained that some enthusiasts decided that 'we must go to Louisiana because that's where it comes from' (Rick, 13/08/12). This is how he explained that interest in Cajun and Zydeco styles of dancing gained momentum in the UK. One such enthusiast, for example, was Vicki, who explained that she went to Louisiana and 'spent three weeks learning to do it properly' (Vicki, 27/04/11). A similar interest was shown by Scandi dancers, such as Tom, who talked in the last chapter about seeing an advertisement for a dance course in Sweden that was taught by 'expert' Swedish folk dancers, at the time when interest in Scandinavian folk social dance was beginning to take off in the UK. While many Scandi dancers are keen to learn their dances in the place of origin in order to be better dancers in the UK, Jack points out that there are also a few who 'view dancing in this country as practice to doing the real thing in Sweden' (Jack, 26/08/11). These particular dancers have perhaps already attained a certain level of competence through multiple visits to Scandinavia, and feel they have out-grown Scandi dancing in the UK. References such as 'learning to do it properly' and 'the real thing' suggest that these participants consider practice away from the place of origin, such as in the UK, suffers as a result of losing its rootedness in its original culture, and is therefore less real. There is also the suggestion that there is a level of capability that is only available in the place of origin, which is felt to be needed by some UK participants in order to fit in. Visits to the place of origin of the dance style are therefore relatively common.

Anecdotal evidence from conversations with participants, suggests that since the 1990s there has been a steady flow of musicians and dancers visiting Louisiana and Scandinavia in order to experience 'the real thing', and to 'learn to do it properly'.

For participants in Cajun, this is also evidenced through articles and advertisements published in the magazine *Cajun Life and Times*, which promoted a wider interest in the culture surrounding the Cajun and Zydeco dance styles. As discussed in Chapter 2, this magazine published many articles about places in Louisiana of interest to musicians and dancers, and advertisements for accommodation and music venues such as bars, restaurants, and clubs in Louisiana. However, in general, Cajun and Zydeco music and dance are not considered a major tourist attraction for the region, being secondary to mangrove swamps, crocodiles and Cajun food, and neither is there a presentational form of these dances for tourists (Esman 1984; Ancelet 1992; Bankston and Henry 2000). Individual participants in Scandinavian folk social dance have also travelled to Norway and Sweden in search of folk music and dance, and over the last five years an organised group of up to ten people have visited Sweden from the UK at least once a year. These visits are usually planned in order to coincide with a number of festivals, in particular two weeks in June, when there are numerous festivals and social dances in the Dalarna region of central Sweden<sup>15</sup>. At these and other festivals, there are many opportunities to dance socially or to play music informally, and although this may be the focus of such visits, participants also take the opportunity to experience the wider culture of the location.

This interest in experiencing ‘the real thing’ can be seen in the larger context of social changes in the UK and elsewhere that were taking place in the early 1990s. Since the 1960s there had been in general, a culture of rising social awareness and a wider world view, reflected for example in various ‘rights’ campaigns and other social protests, and increasing interest in the social sciences in academia. In the late 1970s and 80s, the UK also experienced a rise in the number of social history museums, and a growing ‘heritage industry’ of which cultural tourism was a large sector (Jordanova 1989; Merriman 1989). The coincidental development of the heritage industry and cultural tourism, and the marketing of ‘World Music’, as mentioned earlier as a factor influencing the growth of interest in folk music and social dances not native to the UK, can also be seen in the context of the commoditisation process inherent in contemporary consumer culture (Watson and

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<sup>15</sup> Although the focus of this thesis is on practices in the UK, participation in these styles of music and dance is not bounded, and therefore details about events and activities outside the UK are limited only to such information that might affect practice in the UK.



Kopechevsky 1994). This also reflects a change in approach to tourism, as increasingly tourists are interested in trying to “achieve deeper and more meaningful experiences, by changing their role – engaging in volunteer tourism or creative tourism” (ETC 2006; p. 5).

Discussions with participants who made visits to the place of origin of the dance style they practice in the UK, revealed that where possible these short holidays were something of a cultural exploration. Many of those interviewed spoke of these trips, whether to Louisiana, or Sweden and Norway, fondly recounting anecdotes of events, situations, and encounters that were influential to them, or as entertaining stories about their holiday. In reporting on these visits, the research participants showed themselves to be very adventurous as they often sought out experiences that were outside of the regular tourist tracks. Often folk music and dance provided a springboard, allowing these travellers to explore other cultures and provide a way through which to engage with the people and culture of the places they visited beyond ‘regular’ sightseeing. Nearly all spoke of interacting with the people who lived there, with many stories of hospitality and kindness, and curiosity about visiting musicians and dancers who could join in with their local events. For all of those who recounted such stories, such engagement as this goes beyond the music and dance, and results in an appreciation of the original context of these activities.

All of those that made such visits prepared and researched their trip beforehand, in particular by gaining information from others that had visited recently, about where to go and what to do, in much the same way as other travellers may prepare for an experiential holiday. However, while some had a very general, but well researched, touristic approach to these visits, others took a more targeted and didactic approach, seeking out specific learning opportunities, or people, associated with the particular music and dance style.

UK participants in Scandinavian folk music and dance usually had very clear objectives to their visits to Scandinavia, and Sweden is the most popular destination for them. At certain festivals in Sweden, dance workshops play an important role, and for some UK visitors these are more important than the evening social dances. The format of these festivals is similar to how UK events are programmed, and the holding of workshops before an evening dance, for example, is common throughout

Europe at events of this type. There are also specialist summer schools for musicians and dancers, and those held at Malung in central Sweden, are well known to UK participants, and appear to be very popular with them. Particular teachers, dancers, and musicians are also known to UK participants and are often an attraction of some of these summer schools and workshops. The Hardanger Fiddle in Norway and the Nickelharpa in Sweden are rarely played outside these countries, and so workshops and courses in these instruments are of particular interest, as they are very hard to come by elsewhere. Often UK participants in these workshops bring back the skills they have learnt and introduce them to musicians in the UK. Specialist fiddle workshops focusing on this style of playing, and Polska dance workshops, are in particular very popular with UK participants. The travel itinerary for these visits is often planned around events such as these.

The arrangements for UK, Cajun and Zydeco musicians and dancers visiting Louisiana are very different to that of the musicians and dancers visiting Scandinavia. This is because there are few dance workshops, if any, held at festivals in Louisiana, and the objective of these visits is for participants to take part in festivals. UK dancers therefore treat their participation in such events as an opportunity to learn on the dance floor by also attending clubs and bars or other places where they will find dancing. UK musicians who visit Louisiana wishing to learn Cajun and Zydeco music, also find that there are very few workshops, the learning practice in Louisiana, like that in the UK, being based on informal sessions especially those run by known Cajun and Zydeco musicians. These musicians in Louisiana appear to be relatively accessible and easy to locate, enjoying the attention of European visitors, and some especially are known at particular venues. Michael Savoy, for example, is the elder of a well-known Cajun musical family and also makes and sells Cajun accordions, and holds occasional music sessions at his instrument workshop and shop, which British musicians mentioned visiting. The travel itinerary for most UK, Cajun and Zydeco participants is therefore less targeted than Scandi participants visiting Scandinavia, and more of an exploration in search of experience.

Travel to the place of origin is treated by all of these participants as an opportunity to learn more about their style of music and dance, and as a way to enrich their appreciation of their activities in the UK, however, participants also pursue other

options to these ends. Musicians from Louisiana and from Scandinavia often play at festivals in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, and it is common for UK musicians and dancers to travel to these distant festivals to experience these live performances. There are a number of Cajun and Zydeco festivals in Holland, Germany and France<sup>16</sup>, for example, and for UK participants this is cheaper and more convenient than travelling to Louisiana to experience these performances. There are also many festivals throughout Europe that include a variety of folk social dances, the Grand bal de Europe, at Gennetines<sup>17</sup> in Central France, and Andanças in Portugal, are two examples, and these frequently include Scandinavian musicians, and Scandinavian dance workshops and folk social dances. However, as Scandinavian countries and these places are equally accessible from the UK, these festivals do not offer a significant alternative for Scandi enthusiasts to going to Scandinavia itself. The reason that these enthusiasts might visit these festivals on mainland Europe, is more likely so that they can dance a number of different styles of folk social dance, and not only Scandinavian.

Domestically, Cajun and Zydeco dances at the clubs in London always attract larger numbers of participants when the music is by Louisiana musicians playing there on their tours of Europe, than when they schedule UK musicians. The Savoy Family (2011), The Pine Leaf Boys (2012), and Doug Powell (2013) are recent examples that attracted participants from outside London. These musicians also often play elsewhere in the UK at a variety of different venues, but there is no guaranteeing that there will be dancing at all of these events. Similarly, when tutors and musicians from Scandinavia visit the UK, they attract considerable interest from participants across the country, and attendance at their workshops or concerts is usually very good. The organisers of events at Kinnersley, and Scandimoot often bring over dance tutors and musicians from Scandinavia to hold workshops at their events. These musicians and dancers also often do concerts and dance presentations, and occasionally additional social dances at other venues around the country, which help to subsidise their trip to the UK. These additional events are usually much smaller

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<sup>16</sup> Jouars-Pontchartrain, France - <http://www.topela.eu/pages/fr/le-festival-cajun.php>

Saulieu, France - <http://www.bayouprod.com/fr/nuits-cajun-de-saulieu.html>

Raamsdonkveer, Netherlands - <http://www.zydecozity.nl/en>

Germany and Switzerland (Festival tour) - <http://www.americancajunfestival.com/cms/index.php/en/>

<sup>17</sup> Le Grand Bal de l'Europe, Gennetines, France - [http://gennetines.org/?set\\_language=en](http://gennetines.org/?set_language=en)

Andanças, near Espirito Santo, Portugal - <http://www.andancas.net/2015/pt/>

than the festivals they were originally invited to, and can be at a variety of venues, such as the Swedish Churches in Liverpool and Cardiff, and in small cafes and bars, but not all of these allow dancing.

This account shows the importance of travel to participants, and how by travelling they are able to extend the horizons of their own practice to take in a number of locations. Travelling to see musicians and tutors visiting the UK, and excursions to festivals in Europe, serve a similar purpose as travelling to the place of origin of their music and dance style, as they are perceived of as a means by which to get closer to 'the real thing'. The motive behind travelling in the examples given above is therefore to experience something that participants do not have locally, but that would enrich their appreciation of the style. Participants therefore use these experiences as reference points to inform their practice in the UK.

#### Practice Back Home – learning from experience

Not all participants undertake travel in the ways described, and the numbers of those who do seek reference points for their practice in these ways are a significant minority. As mentioned earlier, due to the scarcity of events in either style, generally, participants are willing to travel considerable distances within the UK to festivals and events, making it difficult to ascertain the number of those who would, for example, attend specifically to see a particular Louisiana or Norwegian musician. In addition, as explained in Chapter 1, it is extremely difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the total number of people who participate in these dance styles, and therefore equally difficult to judge how many participants make such trips as these outside the UK. Through involvement and fieldwork, however, it is possible to estimate that less than 20% of those involved in either style travel outside the UK in the ways described above. As will be shown, these participants are significant because of the influence that they can exert on practice in the UK, and this is especially the case for those who have travelled to the place of origin of their music or dance style.

The way that participants within the different social dance communities discussed their experience of travel can be broadly divided into two distinct categories. For some participants, a visit to either Louisiana or the Scandinavian countries was not

necessarily a key signifier of belonging to their group, and the benefits of the experience were expressed as being felt personally rather than socially. This group of participants were happy to share their experiences of these visits socially, but it was most common for these discussions to be treated with a great deal of modesty. This could be likened to similar conversations between people who find that they have shared a common experience and for most, this topic was not high on the agenda for those participants interviewed. For example, although it often did become part of the discussion when an interviewee talked about their past involvement in their music or dance style, the subject was not one of the first things interviewees mentioned.

However, other participants understood their travel experiences in different terms, and on return to the UK, choose to use this experience productively, and therefore have impact on the social practices of these groups. It was clear in interviews, and more generally in fieldwork interactions and conversations, that this group of people placed key importance on their travel experiences. This group of participants includes musicians, tutors, and event organisers, and it could be argued that they have an interest in sharing their experiences of these visits. These participants are influential in their group because in most cases they lead and make choices that determine the direction of practice in the UK. For this set of participants, such visits are valuable in a number of ways, but particularly as a key signifier of belonging to the group, and of their position within the group. These participants consider themselves to have built up some expertise, and gained in-depth knowledge about the style of music and dance, often through multiple visits, which they share with the larger group. Musician Amanda, for example, feels her yearly visits to Sweden are vital to her for passing on the more nuanced aspects of playing Scandinavian fiddle style when running her music workshops:

If you were learning a tradition it's kind of nice to go and hear the source, it's like going back to source material really. If you have somebody that is playing it all the time it has a certain accent, it's like how people speak a language, so you know, for me going over to Sweden in the summer, it's like me topping up my language skills. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

This set of participants have a considerable impact on the rest of the group as their experience informs decisions which are made, and is often used to direct and guide practice, such as by advising on the 'observed' way of doing things.

For event organisers, there are very pragmatic reasons behind visits to events outside the UK, as they have to make informed choices about whom they should include on the programmes they plan, for example, and these choices should agree in general terms with the consensus within the genre. They also have to be seen to have an in-depth knowledge of their dance style, as participants place a lot of confidence in their choices. These choices can influence what is learned at workshops as tutors have different approaches and interests, the choice of tutor can therefore determine what and how music and dance are taught. This experience can also inform decisions about which musicians they wish to invite to the UK to be included on their programme for festivals. The choices that organisers make can also have far-reaching financial implications for the group that may affect future practice, and information can be exchanged by networking with other organisers at other festivals. Organisers therefore travel to festivals and events outside the UK where they can not only judge for themselves the 'suitability' of particular tutors or musicians, but can also tap into the larger network of the genre and its consensus viewpoints and trends.

There is therefore an ascribed value to such visits for musicians, tutors and organisers, and this value is particularly evident for tutors. For example, tutors gain a level of 'kudos' within these social settings by demonstrating that they have the experience of playing or dancing in the place of origin of their particular music and dance style. These visits also often pass as the 'credentials' of the tutor, acting as a form of authentication of what they are teaching and contribute to their confidence and authority. One dance tutor interviewed, confided that they had only recently visited the place of origin of their chosen dance style:

For me it was really quite bizarre in a way to have done xxxx dance in England for, well, you know seven years . . . committedly for four years . . . and I have been teaching xxxx dance for two years now, and I had never actually seen it in the wild. (Anon)

The tutor added that they found this '*deeply embarrassing*', because before this they were uncertain whether they had earned '*the right to stand in front of people and say this is how it is done*', or to '*tell people faithfully this is how you do x, y, and z*' (Anon). However, the tutor justified their 'authority' to teach before their own visit, as being based on having attended many workshops held by respected (and named) dance tutors, and from having been deeply involved in the dance style. The experience of visiting the place of origin of the dance style therefore, both validates what the tutor is teaching, and elevates the tutor within the group, and in workshops tutors often quote their experience in the place of origin.

As was described in Chapter 2, tutor led workshops are the focus of teaching and learning in these styles of music and dance, and are an extremely important part of the infrastructure of these folk music and social dance styles. At workshops, the experiences of the tutor are often put to effective use, as personal anecdotes about how and where tutors learned what they now teach are common, and are often used to illustrate what is being taught, and these reflect different approaches taken by tutors in each of these groups. In Cajun and Zydeco, where the majority of workshops are in dance, these anecdotes are most often about festivals, clubs and other venues that dance tutors have visited in Louisiana, and in particular, their observations and sometimes conversations with people at these venues. Comments and more general descriptions of the experience of dancing, are relevant reference points for the dance style being taught; an example often heard is the explanation that it is very often hot and humid in Louisiana, and so these dances are done in a very relaxed style suited to dancing in that type of environment. These anecdotes therefore reflect the experiential approach to visits to Louisiana, taken by those who practice Cajun and Zydeco in the UK. As stated earlier the approach of Scandi tutors on similar visits to Norway or Sweden for example, is more focussed and didactic, and this is reflected in their workshops in the UK, the focus of which is quite different to that of workshops in Cajun and Zydeco. Scandi tutors may also talk about their observations, for example, the need for controlled compact movements on a crowded Swedish dance floor, however, these dance tutors' anecdotes, while also being illustrative, are much more likely to reference a particular dancer or dance tutor they have observed or been taught by. While particular places or festivals may also be mentioned, in general learning is more prescriptive and more to do with the

technicalities of a dance, and there is far more emphasis on the skills to be mastered and, for example, the stylistic distinctions between various Polska's. The reference points that Cajun and Scandi tutors have acquired and learned when visiting the place of origin of the dance style are therefore reflected not only in what these tutors teach to the participants in the workshops, but also how they teach. It would be useful therefore to look at these differences in detail to consider firstly, why these differences exist, and secondly how this affects practice in the UK.

### An Historic Perspective to Learning and Teaching practices

What these observations and descriptions illustrate is two distinct approaches to finding reference points for teaching and learning, one that is based on direct experience, or immersion in the practice, the other a scholarly or didactic approach. While it is easy to identify such a dichotomy, this is not to imply that learning strategies can be easily categorised as one or the other, as these approaches can complement each other, and an individual may choose a number of ways in which to inform their own practice. It is, however, apparent from what has been described that the favoured approach in the practice of Cajun and Zydeco, whether in the UK or Louisiana, is to learn through observation and involvement, while engaging with fellow participants on the dance floor or in music sessions. This immersive approach contrasts with that favoured in the practice of Scandinavian folk music and dance, where learning is more formal, and participants are generally taught by a tutor. Both of these styles of music and dance organise their teaching practices around their respective approach. In order to explain these two approaches and how this situation may have come about, it is useful to take a broader view and to examine these practices historically. From this, it will then be possible to look at how these different approaches influence practice in the UK.

The background to Cajun and Scandi folk music and dance practices in the UK has been described in Chapter 2, which showed that these folk practices have followed two very different lines of development. In addition, the literature review to this thesis described how the history of each of these styles of folk music and dance in their places of origin, has also been very different, and consideration of this can contribute to an understanding of these contrasting approaches to teaching and



learning. One significant factor that explains these differences is that Scandinavian folk practices were part of a folk revival during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Cajun and Creole practices have not been part of any similar revival. The influence that the folk revival in Scandinavia had on folk practices is considerable, and this not only informs how interest and practice have been conceived in these countries in the past, but also how current practices have developed in these countries and subsequently in the UK.

i) Scandinavian folk music and dance as revivalist folk practice

In many European countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an interest in folk practices developed motivated by the fear that, with increasing urbanisation, fewer people were taking part in these practices and that therefore they faced a danger of dying out (Ling 1997; Myers and Wilton 2011). Folklorists and scholars, such as Hans Johansen and Jens Peter Dam in Denmark, Cecil Sharpe and Lucy Broadwood in England, and Achille Millien in France, took to field research in order to transcribe music and write down dances, creating collections, the intention of which was to preserve folk music and dance that they believed would otherwise be lost forever. These texts were also taken as the foundation on which to ensure the continuation and revival of these practices. This folk revival was particularly strong in Sweden, where one of the earliest folk dance societies was formed in 1893, the Svenska Folkdancen Vänner (Friends of Swedish Dance), and this was followed shortly after by an equivalent organisation in Denmark<sup>18</sup>. Their activities included 'producing handbooks and manuals, and organising workshops and demonstrations, theatrical exhibitions and festivals' (Neilsen 2011; p. 45). Just over ten years later, the society published the *Lekstugan* (Hirschs 1903, 1906), a two-volume collection of instructions and music to Swedish gammaldans (old dances). Later the Svenska Ungdomsringen, (National Society for Swedish Folk Dancers) published *Beskrivning av Svenska Folkdanser, Del 1* (1933) (Description of Swedish Folk Dances, Part 1), and *Svenska Folkdanser, Del 2* (1937) (Swedish Folk Dances, Part 2), known respectively as 'The Green Book' and 'The Blue Book'. In addition between 1922 and 1940, Nils Anderson, still fearing that Swedish folk music was 'threatened with extinction', 'collected most of the material for his book *Svenska låtar* (Swedish

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<sup>18</sup> The English Folk Dance Society was founded in London in 1911 (Wolfram 1960; p. 251)

Songs) which remains the most popular printed source of Swedish folk music' (Ling 1997; p. 18). All of these texts have been reprinted and therefore those interested in Swedish folk dance and music have a significant amount of documentary resources available to them, and this is also the case to a lesser extent for other countries in Scandinavia. The revival ensured the survival of a great many examples of folk music and dance, however, the creation of such documentation had a number of consequences in Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe.

The activities of the early folk revivalists perpetuated an idea and an image of folk that persists to the present day, and which was referenced at the beginning of Chapter 2. The idea of folk is founded in 19<sup>th</sup> century European Romanticism, where it describes the 'essence' of the people of a nation (Myers and Wilton 2011; p. 1) and the collecting and documenting of folk practices encouraged and validated a romanticist's perspective. As well as ensuring their continuation, through documenting these practices, this essence was also preserved and set in stone as a reference point for the people of a nation. These practices could therefore also be imagined as representing a moment in time set in a romanticised past. Jack referred to Scandi social dancers in England who actively engage in this construct. In his interview, he mentions a small group of dancers who have a background in the Society for International Folk Dance. For members of this group, the reference works referred to earlier are extremely important, and Jack recalled that away from the social dance events:

. . . they want to do a dance as a sort of Historical re-enactment type of dance . . . [and ] they like getting dressed up in the Swedish costume and doing displays . . . there is a lot of interest in that group, as I am sure you will have seen, in doing it right, right according to the authority, say for example the Blue Book. (Jack, 26/08/11)

The costumes he mentions represent this idea of a romanticised past when it is imagined that these dances were originally practiced. Importantly, many of this group form the core of the tutors that hold workshops in UK, and they carry over this interest in 'doing it right' into learning these dances for a social setting, and can therefore hold considerable influence.

The work of folk revivalists in preserving and ensuring the continued existence of these folk practices had a considerable impact at the time, which can also be seen in present day practice. By making records of folk music and dance for the first time, folk revivalists changed one of the salient features of the music and dance that they wished to preserve, for it removed and detached these folk practices from their origins and positioned them within a literate and urban culture. In England, Cecil Sharp for example, described these practices as belonging to the 'unlettered', 'common people' of a pre-industrial society (Sharp 1972; p. 3). These texts made possible folk practices that were based on a reinterpretation of the folk aesthetic that had been defined by earlier romanticists, and supported a different type of appreciation of folk. The notion of folk as a category of artistic endeavour was discussed in the literature review to this thesis, and this gave an indication of some of the primary points that are representative of the folk aesthetic (Scholes 1955; Karpeles 1955). This discussion indicated that the idea of folk includes a concept of tradition built on maintaining the continuity of practice, and this is most often expressed as a lineage based on reference to a place or a particular individual. The cornerstone of this lineage, however, is that folk music and dance are transmitted orally and aurally, by observation and imitation, from one person to another and from one generation to the next. This is the foundation of the folk aesthetic, which gives priority to, and values these characteristics. The recording of folk music and dance, however, while maintaining this lineage in text, created a new set of reference points and an alternative way in which folk music and dance could be taught and learned. Instead of relying on oral and aural means of transmission, these documents provided written music, and notations of folk dances that could be used to learn folk music and dance, and provided a means by which learning could become formal and didactic. The 'Blue Book', for example is the main reference work for dancing Polska types of dances, and is used by dance tutors in Sweden and in the UK. Tutor June has paid many visits to Sweden to learn folk dances, and comments:

I don't know whether you know about how Polska, kind of, has been taught and has been learnt for the last 50 odd years or more in Sweden, but it is set in stone, how it should be danced, there is something called the Blue book . . . and that is how you do them, it is the bible. (June, 22/08/11)

The idea that these dances are ‘set in stone’, is one that influences practice in the UK for many of the participants who use this book as the basis for pursuing these dances with the aim of ‘doing it right’. These dance reference books and accompanying music are much respected, if not revered by some current Scandinavian folk dancers. The use of such reference material goes some way to explain the didactic approach in current practices, and the prescriptive nature of learning in current Scandinavian folk music and social dance. June adds:

. . . and then if you want to be taken seriously especially in Stockholm, as a Polska teacher, you must get your Zorn medals, so you go and take the tests, you take the exams. (June, 22/08/11)

Tests and competitions, such as the Zorn trials, where the medals that June refers to are awarded, are one of the consequences of the didactic approach to folk music and dance, which came about as a consequence of the revivalist approach. Authoritative instructions and written music also provide a source against which music and dance performance could be measured for accuracy, being judged by their closeness to these authoritative texts, and a competitive element to folk music and dance practices was therefore possible. Thus, in Norway a number of annual national and regional festivals are organised, at which there are open competitions in the performance of both music and dance. One such competition is the *Landskappleiken*<sup>19</sup>, in which the London Hardanger fiddle group competed for the first time in 2010. In Sweden, dancers and musicians can enter into the annual Zorn trials (cf. Kamansky 2007) where they compete to show their proficiency as Swedish folk musicians or dancers, and medals are awarded for the best presentations. Zorn medals are considered the highest accolade for many Swedish folk musicians and dancers, and a very prestigious award within these folk practices.

The ideas of continuity and lineage, which are important elements of the folk aesthetic, are maintained in this revivalist approach to folk, and are also demonstrated in current practices of Scandi, most often through reference to

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<sup>19</sup> cf. <http://norwayfestivals.com/en/festivals/landskappleiken>

particular persons. For example at Scandi events in the UK, it is common for information or a short résumé of the background of tutors giving workshops to be included on flyers and in the programme of events, as their name may be unfamiliar. In folk music generally, the reference to a musician of an earlier generation who has been responsible for passing on a particular tune, can substitute for the name of a composer in other genres of music, and such referencing describes a lineage through which the tune has been passed on. In this way, learning a style of folk music therefore carries with it an appreciation of its tradition, and a respect for people and places in that tradition. The folk revival has its roots in the works of scholars and collectors in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who transcribed folk tunes and dances that up until then had been passed on orally and aurally, in an attempt to preserve this lineage, and in the process attributed certain tunes to particular musicians. This practice continues, and Scandinavian dance tunes that have been transcribed, and are currently played for social dance, are most often titled with such a credit, for example *Uppland bondpolska efter Gås-Anders*, or *Hoppvalse efter Kristian Oskarsson* (Bowen 1999). However, while this may reflect links with the folk revival, currently many tutors whether of UK or Scandinavian origin, do not use written music in their workshops and encourage oral and aural learning practices. Workshop tutors on some occasions will attribute a tune that they are teaching to such a source, however, they may alternatively mention who they have studied under, or learned the tune from, thereby similarly suggesting a lineage. Such referencing is also used by UK tutors when describing certain aspects of style of playing, such as ornamentations, and other nuances of the music distinctive of the genre. As described in Chapter 2, at some Scandi festivals music workshops are organised as an informal ‘tune swop’, where musicians get together without a tutor to teach each other tunes. Musicians that share tunes at these workshops are also likely to reference either the musician or the place where they learned the tune. As described earlier, Scandinavian dance tutors from the UK mostly reference a particular dancer or dance tutor they have observed or been taught by on their visits to Scandinavia, and the names of tutors from Scandinavian countries, who have visited and taught at events like Scandimoot, are also commonly mentioned by British tutors in their workshops. This is usually spoken of in the context of ‘this is what we learnt from x’ or ‘this is how x did it’, or ‘this is what x said’, and tutor June treats this aspect of teaching with some levity:

I enjoy saying “well Maria Royos, who of course traces her pedigree back to about 1600, and is thoroughly steeped in Bhoda, what she said is this” (laughs). (June, 22/08/11)

These comments act as authoritative reference points, and also describe the lineage by which these dances have been learned, and are important to the folk aesthetic.

The romantic notion that these authoritative texts illustrate the essence of the people of a nation at some remote moment in the past, and that this should be performed for competition and entertainment, go some way to explain the popularity of staged presentations of folk dance. Such entertainment is seen in a number of contexts, for example as educational entertainment on national occasions (Vail 2003), or as part of the tourism industry (Eriksen 1993). Festivals of folk dance, where folk dances from a number of countries, including Scandinavian folk dances, are presented to an audience and are organised annually in the UK, for example, the *Dance Around the World* festival<sup>20</sup> in London and the *Tredegar House Folk Festival*<sup>21</sup> in Wales. The Society for International Folk Dance is an example of an organisation set up on the premise of the revivalist approach to folk music and dance. Sue has been a member of this society for a number of years and describes its activities:

A lot of the dances we do in the society, they are choreographed [but] they are not for presentation, we do them socially with no thought of presenting them, but they are sequences, they're set sequences and you have to kind of know that they fit a particular piece of music, that's how we do all of them . . . Scandi is a very different kettle of fish really. (Sue, 02/02/12)

Sue clearly differentiates between the two performance contexts and types of events in Scandinavian folk dance. The dances performed ‘*in the society*’ are choreographed and part of a set repertoire, and therefore in this sense are presentational, even though they are ‘*not for presentation*’ to an external audience. These are, however, also the types of dances that would be performed to an audience at international folk dance events. The choreography and the identity of these dances, is derived from the texts of the revivalist approach to folk. The dances are performed ‘*socially*’ by members of an organised group who meet on a regular

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<sup>20</sup> cf. <http://www.datw.org.uk/>

<sup>21</sup> cf. <http://www.tredegarhousefestival.org.uk/>

basis, however, these dances are not 'social dances' in the same sense as the Scandi dances. Scandi is therefore '*a very different kettle of fish*' because there are no sequences of moves to be memorised and executed in a set pattern, and dancers have freedom to execute spontaneously dance moves appropriate for the style. Sue refers to the social dancing in Scandi as 'free-styling in the genre' (Sue, 02/02/12). However, in addition the emphasis in social dance is on participation rather than skill in executing the dance moves. What this also demonstrates is the ease in which the revivalist approach to folk music and dance can become an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1989), as these choreographed dances and the costumes created can then become misunderstood as 'the real thing', rather than an interpretation.

## ii) Cajun and Zydeco as evolving folk practices

Cajun and Zydeco folk music and dance have a very different history to that of Scandinavian and other European folk styles, having a clear beginning, in 1764 with the arrival of the Arcadians, in the territory of Louisiana (Tisserand 1998; Savoy 1986; Ancelet 1999). A hundred years later, what we now recognise as Cajun and Zydeco folk practices, had only recently gained a foothold in Louisiana, when at the same time, the concern in Europe was for preserving folk practices that it was feared were dying out. The Arcadians of French origin, mixed with many indigenous and other immigrant communities, such that when in the 1930s Alan and John Lomax documented recordings of music in Louisiana, they reported 'the Cajun and Creole traditions of Southwest Louisiana are unique in the blending of European, African, and Amerindian qualities' (Lomax 1999; p. 2). Cajun music developed alongside Creole music, which later became known as Zydeco, and from the beginning, they were both subject to a variety of sources of influence, locally and from further immigration. The growth of these folk styles has therefore taken place relatively recently, their origin is evident, and their development can be traced through several generations of musicians.

Perhaps because the history of Cajun and Zydeco has spanned such a short period, there has been little danger of the music dying out, it has developed and been practiced consistently since 1764. There has therefore not been the same impetus to capture Cajun and Zydeco music in collections or to document it, as was the case

in the European folk revival. The only similar activities, as mentioned, were conducted by folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, who undertook field recordings in and around Louisiana between 1934 and 1937 (ibid.). Other large scale recording and documenting of music has taken place much more recently, and has been for commercial reasons, resulting in multiple versions of the same tune by different artists, and not a definitive catalogue of music such as may result from a revival. However, within the last 20 years, there has been recognition that when the accordion replaced the violin in the 1920s and 30s, many of the early Cajun fiddle tunes may have been lost (Savoy 1984; p. 13), and we can assume a similar effect when the accordion was introduced into Zydeco music later.

The first known record of Cajun dancing was in a publication printed in 1887, when a dancing event was described by George Washington Cable in his travel writings (Duke 1988). The cultural geographer Lauren Post documented Cajun dance during the 1930s, independently of Alan Lomax who was making his recordings of the music at the time, and in his later work in the 1950s, Post documented other dance activities in Louisiana (LSU 2011; Post 1974). These writers were interested in these dances as part of Louisiana cultural life, and did not therefore record or document the details of the music and the styles of dance, and until recently there has been little scholarly interest in Cajun and Zydeco music and dance.

Some recent writers have discussed the development of Cajun and Zydeco styles of music and dance, and referenced the many influences on the 'unique blending' that Lomax referred to in the quote above (Savoy 1984; Ancelet 1989; Plater et al 1993; Brasseaux 2009). Manuals and instructions for Cajun and Zydeco dancing styles were not readily available until the recent interest in these styles in the 1980s and 90s (for example, Harris et al 1988; Duke 1988; Rutherford 1991; Plater et al 1993). The recording and publication of details about the practices of Cajun and Zydeco music and dance, has therefore been a relatively recent activity.

The absence of authoritative texts documenting Cajun and Zydeco music and dance, such as those available resulting from a folk revival, has considerable implications for these styles of music and dance. Firstly, unlike the European examples given earlier, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cajun and Zydeco has not found itself removed and detached from its original setting, or positioned within a literate and urban culture, as



a result of influences such as the interest of scholars and folklorists and the documents they produced. Secondly, before the large-scale availability of audio recordings, Cajun and Zydeco practices could only be learned and transmitted by oral and aural means, and by observation and imitation. Documents such as those resulting from a revivalist interest in these practices did not exist, and so there were few alternative ways for these practices to be learned and transmitted. Thirdly, in the European examples given above, documentation offered an alternative way of thinking about and approaching folk practices, changing the basic tenets on which they were valued and organised, something not apparent in practices in Louisiana. The region has not been an exception to the trend towards increasing urbanisation, and until recently, there has been little in the way of formalised practice, such as workshops, presentations, or competitions, as seen in Scandinavian practice. Social and technological changes in the twentieth century, such as the availability of audio recordings may have had a comparable affect to that of a revival; however, this topic would require further research outside the remit of this thesis.

The lack of documentation recording music and dance means that the practices of Cajun and Zydeco folk music and dance have not been set in stone, as was the claim for Scandinavian folk, although recent trends suggest this may change. Visits to Louisiana by dancers from the UK, such as Vicki quoted earlier as one of the earliest dancers to visit to '*learn to do it properly*', confirm that the dances are not set in stone, and demonstrate the informality with which these dances are practiced. Her experience on the Louisiana dance floor led to her observing that:

. . . everyone is dancing differently, so although you can analyse it and say you can do this step to it, that is only part of it and they will do that, and they will wander off and do something different and it changes all the time, and half the people won't be doing that anyway, they are just all doing different things.  
(Vicki, 27/04/11)

Vicki indicates, that there is a way of dancing this style of dance and this along with the music is what makes it Cajun or Zydeco dance, however, 'they', the local dancers, build on this and develop their own personal style. This is something that dance tutors in the UK are keen to impress on participants in their workshops, which rarely move above beginner level. This is because dancers are encouraged to

observe and get involved, and from this to develop their own individual style, and to use their creativity within the limits of the style. As described earlier, Cajun and Zydeco dance tutors rarely reference particular people, such as was described as being common in Scandinavian dance workshops, and more regularly will refer to their personal experience in Louisiana. John comments that one of the things he finds attractive about Cajun and Zydeco is the freedom that is allowed in the dancing. He enjoys the fact that there is no one 'looking over your shoulder' and policing the event to check that dancers are 'doing it right' (John, 29/02/12). He suggests that Cajun dancers will always have preferences and some will form opinions about how a dance should be executed, however, these differences are almost inevitable, he says about Cajun dance:

Things should grow and change that is healthy, and you will always get schisms in everything and different forms and different ideas, which is how things change and grow and develop, and holding onto old ways of doing things I think, well it is very bad for society. (John, 29/02/12)

Musicians also accept this with a sense of inevitability but at the same time enjoy this freedom. Experienced Cajun and Zydeco accordion player Andy commented that in his band:

We do it properly, but we wouldn't want to do that all the time because we feel that we might be restricting ourselves, and as musicians and artists, you should never restrict yourselves because you just feel unhappy if you do that. (Andy, 10/07/12)

Developments since the beginning of the 1960s, however, indicate that there may be a change in the way that Cajun and Zydeco is practiced in Louisiana. For example, there has been a small but increasing number of television programmes about Zydeco dance and Creole culture more generally. An example is a television series that has been broadcast since 2008 presented by Zydeco dance teacher Harold Guillory, called *Louisiana Zydeco Live*. Here couples demonstrate their Zydeco dancing skills to television viewers in a staged, club setting (LZL 2008). This change of context signifies the commoditisation of Zydeco dance through commercial television, as it creates the audience-artist dichotomy of presentational performance

described by Turino<sup>22</sup> (Turino 2008). In addition, amateur dance competitions are now seemingly popular in Louisiana, as evidenced by videos posted on the Internet<sup>23</sup>. The motivation for introducing a form of presentational performance to the Zydeco dance style may be very different to the motivation for presentational dance in Scandinavian folk dance.

Further developments indicate that there has also been a move to change the way in which Cajun and Zydeco has been approached, to one that has similarities to that represented by a revival. For example, in 1977, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce organised the first annual Cajun and Zydeco music and dance festival, *Festival de Musique Acadienne et Créoles*, and the Chamber of Commerce supports and promotes cultural projects which it defines as 'traditional', as a means towards increasing local economic and cultural vitality (Mattern 1998). The Cajun French Music Association, was set up in 1984, 'dedicated to promote and preserve Cajun music and culture', (CFMA 2008; p. 1) with an agenda that has many similarities to organisations set up in many European countries at the beginning of their folk revival. The CFMA also organise the 'Le Cajun Awards' for musicians and dancers, whose performances accord to the CFMA definition of 'traditional', echoing the Zorn trials already discussed in relation to folk practice in Sweden. Some identify these changes as part of a revival, others as repressive, sparking debate into whether 'a traditional, authentic Cajun music, and by extension, culture, can be successfully identified' (Mattern 1998; p. 42). Such a revival would, it seems change the evolving nature of Cajun and Zydeco, which historically has adapted and absorbed a diversity of influences (Ancelet, Edwards, and Pitre 1991). These changes may represent a corresponding change of meaning and significance for Cajun and Zydeco music and dance to that of its original context as a participatory dance style, and what is defined as traditional will inevitably also have to be commercial; however, this represents a separate area for further research.

One of the interviewees in this study recalled his dance experience when he was much younger, and it exemplifies the many influences on Cajun music and dance in

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<sup>22</sup> Here, the active group of artists represented by the Zydeco dancers, prepare and deliver a performance as a commodity for the passive commercial television audience.

<sup>23</sup> For example; the Eagles Hall Zydeco Dance Contest - Finalists - April 2011. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoxN8F0IKKM>> (accessed November 2014) and Creole Renaissance Festival 2013 - Dance Contest Finals. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y2qcAF2jes> (accessed November 2014)

its history, and supports the view that it is an evolving music and dance style. Scandi dancer Joe no longer dances Cajun and Zydeco, however, in the 1960s he visited friends in Louisiana many times, and he remarks:

The Cajun that you see now is not what you used to see in Louisiana, what you see now with all these moves in it, takes a lot from jive . . . I remember her [his host] saying that it was when some of the East Coast people got involved with it in the U.S. and it was them mixing the jive in. (Joe, 07/02/12)

Joe's account supports the discussion of dance by Platter et al., who discuss the many influences that have contributed to making Cajun music and dance what it is today. In particular these authors discuss how Cajun dancers took the Jitterbug from East Coast swing and Jive in the 1940s and 50s and added their own moves, which 'gave the dance a distinctive look and cultural flavour' (Platter et al 1993; p. 22), thus creating the Cajun Jitterbug. Cajun and Zydeco music has also for a long time had a close association with 'The Blues', and in many of the older tunes this influence can be easily detected (cf. Lomax 1999). There is evidence that this process continues, as in Louisiana, Zydeco tunes can currently be heard with strong 'Southern Soul' or Reggae influences, and more recently blended with Hip-Hop.

Brennan (1999) writes about a similar process occurring in the example of the development of Irish traditional set dance in the nineteenth century. She describes how the Quadrille dance was brought from Paris to Dublin, and later introduced into country areas, where its dance figures were absorbed and mixed with existing dances, which were later again, influenced by the introduction of the Polka. The outcome 'can be reasonably described as traditional Irish folk dance' (ibid.; p. 980), but she says, the influence of these other dance styles from Europe is unmistakable. These dances:

'demonstrate continuity with older traditions, variation resulting from creative impulse and selection by the community, but they also show a further dimension to the traditional process where elements and influences are drawn down from a wider pool of cultural material.' (ibid.)

This wider pool, she adds, is not necessarily 'old or even vernacular in nature' (ibid.). The process she describes in relation to Irish traditional dance is supported by

documentary evidence, and this may be a similar process to that which has occurred with the development of Cajun and Zydeco music and dance in Louisiana.

In summary, what this account indicates is that Cajun and Zydeco has been practiced as an informal, sociable dance style, without documents that act as an authority that suggests that there is a 'correct' way of doing things. However, these two styles of music and dance remain recognisable as either Cajun or Zydeco, not through authoritative documents, but because they have been passed on through the generations, until relatively recently, only by oral and aural means and through observation and imitation. This satisfies the folk aesthetic, and ensures the integrity of these folk music and dance styles as connected to the culture of the early Arcadian and Creole settlers of Louisiana. This is in spite of being open to many influences since these earliest times, which have been adapted and absorbed into Cajun and Zydeco practice such that these styles have evolved into their present form. Recent moves to create a 'revival', discussed above, are partly inspired by the idea that these practices should be preserved, and this idea mirrors earlier revival movements in Europe, however, these recent moves are largely commercially motivated. It is claimed that the revivalist idea of preservation would halt the process that has allowed these practices to evolve (Ancelet, Edwards, and Pitre 1991), and the result, also mirroring earlier revival movements in Europe, would be a formal and didactic folk practice similar to that described in Scandinavian folk music and dance.

### Learning the Style – adapting to the local influences

These accounts of the practices of Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and dance, serve to illustrate and explain some of the differences in the way in which they are each practiced as a result of their respective historical footing. Further differences were described in Chapter 2, in relation to how these folk styles became popular, and how they were adopted by musicians and dancers in the UK. This showed that the combination of its association with a folk social dance style Euro dance, and the curiosity of musicians looking for a new challenge, greatly contributed to the popularity of Scandinavian folk music and social dance. The momentum of its popularity was added to because it also gained the interest of International folk dancers, who had previously practiced this style of folk dance in a presentational

context. The styles of Cajun and Zydeco music became fashionable as commercial popular music, and through this, a significant number of people became interested in the style of dance. The interest of dancers was such that it had its own momentum, and when the fashion for the music declined, there were sufficient dancers for events and activities to be organised centred on social dancing. Despite these differences, these styles are now organisationally very alike, which has come about as result of them now being practiced as social dance. In particular, they have both adopted the same not-for-profit mode of operation, and this has led to an informality of approach to taking part, that is stimulated by the participatory nature of the practices themselves, which encourages involvement and cooperation.

Tutors at music and dance workshops acknowledge that participation is a vehicle for social activity, and that the majority of those taking part do not necessarily want to be expert dancers or musicians. For most people in dance workshops, their aim is to learn dancing skills that enable them to take part in this music based social setting, and therefore tutors need go no further than instructing about the basics. Cajun and Zydeco tutors often have the benefit of being informed by their experience of the informal dancing styles in Louisiana, where, as Vicki commented above, on the dance floor, '*everyone is dancing differently*'. As a reflection of this, tutors tend to have a relaxed attitude towards teaching that readily acknowledges the importance of the social in social dance. The basics that tutors in social dance are teaching make a dance recognisable, and are a boundaried set of skills that come together as the style of the dance. For Scandi dancer Sue, it is important that the limits are learned and acknowledged:

. . . there comes a point where if you're not doing it the way it was done or at least within the range, there's a range of parameters, and if you're not doing that, then you're not doing the style. (Sue, 02/02/12)

UK Scandinavian dance tutors in particular, may have studied and worked hard to achieve their level of skill and competence through formal study and practise, but in a social dance context, such accuracy is secondary, and some would say unnecessary. For beginners in particular, the technical details of a dance are perhaps more something to aspire to, as well as possibly too much to think about when their concentration is on understanding the style of the dance. Social dance,

therefore, has broader margins of what is permissible, and is more flexible than a formal approach, where technical details may be more clearly defined and are considered more important.

Scandi dancer Jack argues that, while some tutors may place emphasis on formal and technical details, it is vital that they keep sight of the social side to these styles of dancing. Participants such as Jack understand these dances as primarily a social experience. He suggests that this, not the dance, is the priority for those who take it up in Sweden:

I mean the people at XXXX, dancing on the dance floor, are not doing it because they want to preserve exactly some vital essential facet of their national psyche, or their personality, or their something from the past that must be preserved as a living fossil, they don't feel it that way . . . the reason why these dances are danced by the young people in Sweden is because they are fun, and you know, it is as simple as that. Purists are vastly outnumbered. (Jack, 26/08/11)

Tutors in social dance, tend to advise on the 'correct' or 'observed' way of doing things, and in that way have an influence on how dances are performed. However, they are not in control, as the interest of those involved is to learn the basics of the style sufficiently to enable social interaction, and they may not have an interest in practicing all of the formal stylistic details.

Dance tutors in both of these styles of folk dance also acknowledge that dance is a creative activity, and in social dance, there is considerable scope for self-expression through an individual dancer's dance style, keeping within the above-mentioned parameters. This represents a much freer approach in folk social dancing than in more formal, presentational forms of folk dance that are performed and choreographed according to recognised set figures, and where creativity is embedded in the choreography. Scandi dance tutors such as June, engage with this more flexible approach of participatory dance and the need to relinquish control:

I am interested in it as an evolving social dance, and I am interested in making things up and you know, improvising, and I am interested in the flow and the fluidity, and the way the bodies work together and interact with each

other, and I think if you emphasize the foot placement and things, what you get is people who can dance a dance probably quite well in the end, but can't dance anything else. (June, 22/08/11)

Creativity is an aspect of participation that is valued by those involved in both of these dance styles, and is also encouraged by tutors; its value and the importance of the freedom to improvise, for example, is a topic discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 as an aspect of the dance experience. It is unlikely that this freedom is a modern attitude, as this type of creativity has been implicated in the development of Cajun and Zydeco music and social dance that has been subject to a number of influences that they have absorbed and adapted. This suggests a process of evolution of music and dance within the style, as a component of social dance that has been responsible for the development of Cajun and Zydeco to its present form, and it is possible was also in process in Scandinavian folk music and dance prior to its revival. One of the earliest definitions of folk, as discussed in the literature review to this thesis, supports this idea as it suggested that folk is 'the product of evolution' (Karpeles 1955; p. 6).

The notion that music and dance should be evolving is understood by some as being inevitable, and especially in circumstances where music and dance styles have been adopted outside their place of origin. Such music and dance styles are subject to the cultural influences of their host, a place that itself may be open to influences that are not present in the place of origin. Jack explored the idea of the Anglicisation of Swedish folk dance in the UK, reasoning that if the practice is dominated by British people, 'that means that you are going to end up doing something different' (Jack, 26/08/11) because, he suggest, it is not possible to replicate the Swedish experience in the UK. This is supported by the experience of dancers from the UK, when they encounter dancers from the place of origin of a dance style. Vicki on her visit to Louisiana, for example, commented:

I found it quite difficult in Louisiana when I went to Zydeco clubs, I found it quite difficult to dance at first and; because there you are dancing with people who can do it and have been doing it all their lives . . . it feels very different when you are dancing with them to when you are dancing with English people. (Vicki, 27/04/11)



This is reinforced through my own experience and the experience of other participants, when dancing at events in the UK with dancers who accompany bands from Louisiana (fn. 28/01/2012). While being aware of the need to avoid stereotyping, it is evident that people from different regions of the world have different mannerisms and ways of moving, and this will alter how a dance is expressed depending on where it is performed and by whom. This was demonstrated in a recent news article in the BBC Internet news magazine, which celebrated the rare occurrence of a British woman being selected for the annual Samba parade in São Paulo, Brazil. The article reported that 'few Europeans, or even white Brazilians, pass muster as *passistas* - as the samba dancers are called - and our attempts are usually stereotyped as a stiff shuffle.' (Eklund 2015; p. 1)

There are also significant differences in the cultural, ideological, or moral values of participants, which often change from place to place, and can exert an influence on how a dance is performed, as in the following examples. Part of the skill of executing the tight, controlled turns in many Polska dances, involves the two dancers positioning themselves very close together, almost as one, in order to maintain their centre of gravity on a fixed axis between them. For many UK dancers, such social proximity makes them feel uncomfortable, resulting in the two dancers forming a barrel shape within which the axis is not fixed, making controlled turning very difficult. Zydeco dance also requires a degree of physical familiarity between the two dancers, however, the closeness and intimacy in Zydeco dance, appear to be more sexual to both dancers and observers. In a Zydeco dance workshop at one of the regular festivals, the tutor found it very difficult to teach some of the moves because of this, as the majority of participants felt too embarrassed to follow the instructions (fn. 26/01/2013). It seems therefore that adopted music and dance styles will take on some of the idiosyncrasies of the people in the place where they have been adopted, which alters the original form. Accepting these as influences and as part of practice, is therefore also part of the process that allows participatory dance styles to evolve.

A process of change, where a folk style may absorb and adapt outside influences has been describe in relation to dance style in Cajun and Zydeco, and in the example of Irish traditional dance quoted above, which suggest these styles are not static but are evolving. Outside influences on the music can also be taken into

consideration when discussing how a folk music and dance style may evolve, as there is an interaction of the music and dance, which will be described in Chapter 5. As we have heard from musician Andy above, musicians also need to express their creative impulses, and this adds another dimension as dancers respond to the music.

The process whereby a dance style may become Anglicised, as discussed above by Jack, has the potential to generate its own sub-style, and this would not be without precedent. Gronow (1996) charts the growth of the music of Argentinean Tango in Finland from the 1920s and the influences on it that resulted in it becoming, quite distinctly, a Finnish Tango form. At the beginning of the 20th century, the popularity of the Argentinean Tango spread throughout Europe, as not only a dance style but also its music, and each country added a distinct flavour by incorporating local rhythmic and melodic variations. The Tango became very popular in Finland, and strongly influenced by local folk music and dance, began to develop into its own distinctive style (Sirkkilä 2013). Jack perceives a divergent dance style, in that after a relatively short time, an Anglicised version of the Scandinavian folk social dances has begun to develop in the UK.

### Pursuing the Social in Social Dance

The discussion in this chapter has focussed on the ways in which these folk social dancers confirm how these dances should be danced, and how this influences transmission practices. It has looked at how participants go about finding points of reference that they can use to inform their practice, and has identified two approaches that may be taken. Firstly, an approach which can be understood as experiential, which is based on observation and imitation while immersed in participation, and secondly, an approach that is more targeted, and is based on didactic strategies involving reference to particular people and places, and available documentation. The means by which dancers go about this learning process, may not belong exclusively to the first or the second approach, as either is applicable to both dance styles, however, Cajun and Zydeco dance practices have a preference for an experiential approach to learning, while Scandinavian folk social dance practices prefer an approach where participants adopt didactic strategies.

The acquiring of these reference points has the greatest significance to a small but influential group of those who take part in these styles of dance in the UK, and these are the musicians, event organisers, and tutors. This group make decisions that affect and direct participation in these styles of dance in the UK, and they use these reference points as their guide to how these dance styles should be practiced. Workshops are the focus of learning in folk social dance, and the two learning approaches described above are reflected in the ways in which tutors direct learning in their workshops.

It is important to understand how these different approaches came about as it gives an insight into the ways in which folk music and dance are currently conceptualised and practiced. These different approaches can be explained by looking at the historical context of these two styles of folk music and dance, in particular how they have managed to sustain their practices over many years. For example, when a danger of Scandinavian folk music and dance practices dying out had been perceived, a revival was orchestrated, and in order to preserve these practices and their continued existence, they were studied and documented. As a result, however, much of the practice of this style became dependent not only on these texts, but also on a mindset and structure of formal referencing and prescribed practice, which has seen little variation and change. The practice of Cajun and Zydeco has not faced such a threat, and therefore the need to study and document them has not been felt. However, both Cajun and Zydeco, have experienced discernible influences that have been adapted and absorbed through a process of cross-fertilisation, and thereby these styles have changed accordingly and evolved into their current form. The practice of these styles has therefore grown to be informal and open in approach, and what has developed is a practice that is not constrained by authoritative sources, and where the main reference points are other practitioners. The approach to learning bears a direct relationship to the approach to practice more generally.

While the above describes and explains the consequences of the different learning strategies, it does not fully account for the current situation in the practice of these folk music and social dance styles in the UK. An increase in interest and organisation of folk social dancing, has been a relatively recent phenomenon in the UK, and the practice of Cajun and Zydeco has been a part of this. Scandinavian folk dance had previously been practiced for many years before this, however, it was

dominated by the formal approach discussed above, which was reflected in its performance, and it could be described as sociable, rather than social as it is now understood in a social dance context. The transmission of Scandinavian folk music and dance practices in the UK is still very much influenced by the reference points associated with its revival, which are still used for learning and teaching by tutors. However, as it is now practiced as social dance, which is by definition informal, the emphasis of participation is very much on the social. Scandinavian folk music and dance now has this in common with Cajun and Zydeco, and despite the different types of reference points used, tutors are teaching the style of a dance and the parameters within which it is recognisable as such, and therefore what variations are acceptable. Social dance practice in these contexts has more to do with interpretation, than attempting to dance as closely as possible to figures and movements set down in texts. This informality allows for dissimilarity in dancers, external influences, and individuals' creative impulses, and the acceptance of these factors allows participatory dance practices to evolve, as has been the case for Cajun and Zydeco, and is now also for Scandinavian folk social dance.

## Conclusion

The previous chapter looked at the organisation and management of Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk music and social dance in the UK, and described this as being an extension of a general notion of participation, that is made animate in their practice as social dances. What were described are many parallels between the organisation of the two styles, the most significant of which being that they are both run by enthusiasts on a not-for-profit basis, for enthusiasts. What was found is that this methodology encourages the cooperation and commitment of participants, and leads to feelings of empowerment through involvement. What has been established in this chapter is that the current practice of these folk styles is steered by a core of influential members of these groups, who act to guide practice based on their own experience. However, while these members of the groups may be influential, because involvement is informal and participatory, they are in a position of authority but not of control.

Practice is guided by the core group in the absence of a defining authority that determines how practice should be established, however, these activities do not operate within a vacuum, and are not detached from a larger cultural environment to which they belong. While a core group may guide practice, all participants are open to other influences and bring these along with their involvement. Practices therefore develop and change as a result of how these influences are negotiated among group members.

A key role of this core group is to direct practice such that it remains recognisable as Cajun and Zydeco or Scandinavian; however, as was seen in the example of the Zydeco workshop mentioned earlier, their guidance on occasions might be rejected. In addition, while there may be a focus on learning a particular dance in a workshop, such as the Hambo, or the Cajun waltz, for the majority of those involved, this is most often a means to an end. To be a technically proficient dancer, may be an ambition to work towards for some, however, the goal for most, is to become a good enough dancer, in order to be involved in the social activity around the dance.

It is the informality and flexibility that is inherent in participatory practice that leads to feelings of empowerment for those involved, because this allows for these groups to be organised in such a way that dance, in itself an enjoyable pastime, can facilitate social interaction. Those involved also have a responsibility to enable these practices to continue, which is therefore a shared goal. One way to achieve this is to please most of the participants most of the time, and negotiation, with no underlying dogma, allows for this. The next chapter looks specifically at the issue of participation, and the various ways in which practice is managed in order to facilitate social cohesion that ensures stability needed to enable it to continue.

## Chapter 4

### Participation - More than the dance

In the previous chapter, workshops were discussed as places where practice can be negotiated by the participants within these Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance groups. It showed that in workshops, participants learn the limits within which a dance is recognisable as belonging to a particular style, but which also allow for the creative development of the dance style. However, workshops are also important in a number of ways beyond the instruction of the mechanics of the dance. Workshops are where participants initially learn some of the skills that enable them to navigate successfully, their involvement in the social group, and it is this dimension to participation that will be covered here. Firstly, the example of the dance workshop will be used as the vehicle to describe and demonstrate some of the principles and ideas on which practice is based. Learning these skills is not limited to the confines of workshops, but this acts as the foundation on which participants build, by using their experience of social dance events. Secondly, therefore, I shall go on to discuss how what is learnt at workshops translates into practice and how this is added to at social dance events themselves, and how the participation allows those taking part to become involved in more than the dance alone. Finally, I shall look at how participation is shaped, and how this enhances feelings of involvement and ownership, and the resulting sense of belonging that is created.

#### The role of workshops - Involvement, friendship, and formalising intimacy

Workshops have become the focal point for learning dance in the practices of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance groups. Music is learned slightly differently; formal and informal music workshops are usually programmed into the schedule of Scandi events and festivals, while Cajun and Zydeco event organisers have found that there is little need for music workshops. As an alternative, Cajun

event organisers allow for regular sessions<sup>24</sup> and informal ‘get-togethers’, and these can serve a similar purpose to workshops, as they are an opportunity for skills and music to be shared. As one organiser pointed out:

For the first couple years there used to be music workshops offered, (but) it is just not worth the effort, there is just not enough take-up on them . . . they used to do them at Gloucester as well and it didn’t work there either. (Kath, 09/04/12)

Most of them [musicians], they play in sessions locally to them anyway or they get together with somebody . . . if there is somebody who wants to learn from somebody else they just sneak off somewhere . . . people are not really interested in sitting in a class. (ibid.)

This contrasts with the approach taken in the practice of Scandinavian folk music and social dance, and reinforces observations discussed in the previous chapter, where practice of Cajun was described as less, formal or focussed on ‘doing it right’, than in Scandi.

Although the situation for workshops is different for each of these groups, the same basic principles and tenets of teaching and learning, apply to music workshops, music sessions, and dance workshops, only differing in character due to the practicalities of these different activities. In all of these, free from written instruction, the style of transmission is one of practical demonstration, followed by copying and repetition. However, while these activities have this in common, the purpose of these social dance groups is to create the circumstances where the music-based activity of dancing is made possible. With only one exception in this study, it is dancers and not musicians who organise events and activities and set the programme. Musicians are therefore instrumental towards this end, but play a far lesser role than do the dancers in determining how activities are organised socially. I have therefore chosen to concentrate on the experience of the dance workshop, in order to explain and demonstrate the principles and ideas on which participation in these social dance groups is practiced and organised.

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<sup>24</sup> A session is an informal gathering of musicians who gather in order to play a standard repertoire of tunes, and may also feature solo performances. Cajun sessions are often led by a particular musician, or several musicians who normally play in a band together (cf. Vallely, E., (1999)).

All Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance festivals and most events, include dance workshops in their programme, and in some cases, workshops are also held independently of a larger social event. It is here that participants learn where to put their feet and how to move their body when dancing, and the rhythms and nuances of the tunes. In the contemporary practice of these two music and dance styles, it is generally accepted that the starting point for participation is attending workshops, which is for most their introduction to the workings of the group. What is being explicitly taught in dance workshops, however, is the articulation of a specific dance, and the practical skills of balance and other aspects of bodily awareness and proprioception<sup>25</sup> relevant to that particular dance style. However, the manner of teaching and the way in which workshops are organised, gives an insight into the workings of the social group as a whole. By looking at some of the details of what makes up a dance workshop, it is possible to distinguish between the explicit and the implicit; what is being taught and what is being learned at these workshops.

Experienced tutors become aware that people learn how to dance in different ways, and having observed many workshops, it is apparent that some participants want to see movements executed many times, while others like to have them explained verbally. Others are frustrated by this and are impatient to just 'get on and do it'; while some carry with them a small notebook as an *aide memoir* to help them learn a dance. One of the tutors of Scandinavian dance admitted that she often finds these differences challenging, and says that when she is teaching:

I often try if I have got time, to get people to think about their styles of learning and to get people to think, very broadly if they are kinaesthetic, visual or verbal or literary . . . a lot of people really hate words, equally a lot of people find words essential and can't understand something until it is in words . . . [and] counting can be absolutely awful for some people or it can be completely essential for some [other] people. (June, 22/08/11)

Tutors are generally aware of the mix of people that may attend their workshops and the range of needs that they have, however, dancers with varying degrees of experience also often attend. For example, very rarely is a beginner's dance

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<sup>25</sup> The ability of the individual to have an unconscious awareness of movement and spatial orientation.



workshop made up of only beginners, and although more experienced dancers that attend do not take up a formal role, their presence is of great value. These experienced dancers can be an asset to the learning process, as those learning can benefit from their individual attention, and potentially learning can be accomplished using a variety of approaches. Jenny has been involved in Cajun and Zydeco for about five years, and she exemplifies the feelings of many of the dancers in these folk dance styles:

I try and go to the workshops because I went to the workshops when I was learning, to try and learn; and then I think well okay, I can do it now . . . [so] I like to go to at least a couple because then, I think they need people who can do it to be able to show the ones that can't. (Jenny, 28/05/12)

Very often, a workshop therefore becomes a cohesive group activity, with the tutor correcting and facilitating rather than being centre stage. These experienced dancers also benefit from taking part in workshops, as guiding beginners is one way to consolidate what they already know. It is also seen as an opportunity for them to gain experience and to practise, and it widens the social experience of their involvement.

Practise with experienced dancers in this manner can help learners to gain a closer understanding of ways of holding and moving the body, which for some beginners may appear to be unnatural. The articulation of a type of dance, including its stylistic and affective nuances, such as the controlled rising and falling of the body known as *Svict* that is essential in some Swedish dances, can be more easily paid attention to in this type of teaching environment. As much as showing beginners what they should be doing and helping to build confidence, what is also learnt in this way is as much to do with the physical sensation of what the dance feels like. This is much easier learned from experience rather than being taught, being very difficult to explain and much more easily demonstrated. This is particularly the case for learning and understanding the roles of leader and follower, without which participants commonly liken couple dancing to either a car with no driver, or a wrestling match. The leader has to learn to develop a self-assured lead, as speed of travel and direction in navigating around the dance floor is their responsibility. The follower has to learn to respond to the directions given by the leader in order that this

can be accomplished safely and respectfully of other dancers, and this is managed largely through the points of contact between the dancers in the dance hold. There are many variations of dance hold, the ballroom hold being the most familiar, where the leader's right arm stretches around the body of the follower, with the right hand resting flat against the middle of the follower's lower back. The leader's left arm is extended and the hand is in contact with the follower's right hand, while the follower's left hand rests on the shoulder of the leader. The outstretched hand and strength in the leader's right arm, supports the weight of the follower against the centrifugal force created when the couple are turning, but in particular acts as a brake to regulate the speed of the couple as they progress around the dance floor. Slight changes in pressure and firmness help to guide the follower not only in terms of speed, but also in direction of travel, although this is mostly the function of the extended left arm, which acts as the steering arm. It is common in these dance styles for tutors to refer to the steering arm and the brake arm, and the understanding of how this works, for both leader and follower, is greatly enhanced through experiencing the sensation from dancing with those who have done it before. There are, however, very practical reasons for adopting these roles, and experienced dancers help beginners to learn about both body and social awareness appropriate to these dances.

Along with the movements to the music, workshops in social dance serve as a much wider introduction into this social environment, and learning about the leader and follower demonstrates this. Such role taking, for example, is most commonly gendered, with male leaders and female followers, reflecting patriarchal attitudes more prevalent in the past. Comments such as '*the job of the woman is to make the man look good*', by a male Tango teacher in his workshop, are generally treated as an anachronism or as a joke. Such attitudes are less prevalent in these Cajun and Scandi groups, and many female participants would be likely to challenge a man who strongly asserted these values. Many female dancers report finding it unsatisfactory dancing with an overly assertive man and in some cases avoid such partnerships. In general, however, there is a great deal of equanimity and respect between participants, which is in part learned at these workshops, and although the taking up of roles is in most cases gendered, it is not accompanied by out of date values and attitudes. The process of negotiation and the strategies adopted by

women in order to subvert these expected social roles, are discussed by Beggan et al., where they are understood as secondary adjustments to the meanings women apply to following (Beggan et al. 2014); this topic will also be discussed in the next chapter concerning the dance experience. Dancers therefore view the partnership as one in which they are working together, and in certain circumstances and particular dances, the responsibilities for each role can be negotiated and interchanged; Swedish dances like the Polska in particular are regarded as having this quality (cf. Kaminsky 2011).

In general, the male role of leader is perceived of by most women as being more difficult than that of the follower, especially for beginners, as Maggie sympathises:

. . . it's that thing of putting yourself on the line, especially for men I think 'cause they've got to look like they know what they're doing . . . the man usually has to take control, which is ever so difficult if you don't know what you are doing. (Maggie, 07/02/12)

More experienced dancers, however, do experiment in swapping roles, especially at an event where there may be more women than men, it is not unusual for women to dance together and therefore for one of them to be dancing as a leader.

The involvement of experienced dancers in beginners' workshops, is important not only from a practical point of view in terms of learning the dances, but is also significant socially as a way of introducing new participants to how participation is conducted. The experienced dancers for example, build up a rapport with newcomers and help to create a relaxed and welcoming environment.

I think that on the whole, the current . . . dancing community is a pretty open and accepting one, and full of people who enthusiastically want to draw newcomers in, whether they want it or not. (June, 22/08/11)

There is already a natural feeling of kinship and association in groups of like-minded people who pursue the same interest, and workshops are able to build on this. Workshops provide a cohesive group activity based around learning, and are aimed at providing a safe environment in which to nurture respect and trust, and are generally seen as empowering. Tutors encourage attendees to mix, to dance and practise with as many people as possible throughout the duration of the workshop

because this is a valuable exercise, and they can share ideas and experience. In doing so, they encourage friendliness, inclusion, and acceptance, some of the core ideas at the centre of participation in these styles of social dance. Steph describes her experience:

There was no sense that if you can't dance you are not one of us, it was immediately get everyone up and dance, if you can't do it, never mind just follow me it's quite easy, so I felt instantly very easily drawn in. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Workshops therefore serve as a platform for participants to learn what the norms are within these groups, and this plays a role in maintaining an agreed status quo that distinguishes one group from another, and helps to maintain its continued practice. Importantly, participants also learn what is acceptable and what is expected in terms of how these social groups are conducted, and how to conduct themselves.

Learning the conventions of the group dynamic is vital to the social cohesion of these groups. This has a foundation in one-to-one relationships, and those that already have experience can demonstrate how these social relations are conducted within the group. The interpersonal skills and abilities connected with roles, communication and negotiation will be dealt with in the next chapter; the focus here is on how workshops help to establish social competencies that improve the social cohesiveness of the group. Much of the experience of becoming involved in social dance may be new and unfamiliar to many beginners, and there are special relationships that need to be learned in social dancing, relationships that are very different from what the majority of people experience in their daily lives. For most people, for example, there are few situations that involve close physical proximities and sustained physical contact of the type that is experienced in social dance. This is quite apart from the consideration that this physicality involves the mixing of the sexes, which for many can feel awkward. In addition, there are also very few public circumstances where an individual can approach a member of the opposite sex that they may have not met before, and ask them to partner them in a group activity. Learning how to navigate social relationships in these circumstances is as important as learning to navigate around the dance floor, and is not only important to the individual, but also to the success and continuation of the social group.

Participants thus learn about the boundaried and formalised intimacy of social dance, and in some workshops, this is discussed in terms of conventions and courtesies, together with an awareness of individuals' social and spatial proximities. Workshop leaders, for example, may point out that it is not necessary to 'grab' your dance partner and hold them tightly and close to you, but that the dance hold is something that two dancers should both be comfortable with. One workshop leader, for example, pointed out that she had observed a tendency in some men to be too forceful, and to hold their dance partner in a way that was restricting. She explained that this is both unnecessary and uncomfortable for both concerned, and that it stifles creativity and mutuality (fn. 25/01/11). Female dancers may also exercise unnecessary tension that can also be restrictive and disturbs the flow of the dance; experienced dancers can therefore play a key role in this learning experience by teaching through example.

Workshops therefore have a dual function. Participants speak of attending workshops in order to learn a type of dance and its particular style, and this is their function and explicit purpose. No one speaks of attending a workshop in order to learn the workings of the social group, or as an induction into its workings and the sets of behaviour that will help them navigate this novel social environment, although this is the implicit function of dance workshops. Workshops are therefore instrumental in the transmission of the broad understandings inherent in these groups, which include the group's shared habits and manners, as well as the key values and ideas that participants must learn and be familiar with. Their implicit function is therefore as vital to the practice of these dance styles as the learning of how to move on the dance floor. These factors help to define these gatherings socially, and are taken forward to the social dance itself, where they are the foundation for appreciating the workings of wider participation in folk social dance. This aspect of participation was discussed by many of those interviewed who chose to make a comparison with other dance styles, and this is discussed in the next section of this chapter. I shall then go on to explain how attributes of these groups learned in workshops and already discussed, such as friendliness, inclusion, and acceptance, are applied at social dances themselves.

## Introduction to a Dance – Events and Festivals

For participants, many of the attitudes and ways of behaving that have been introduced in dance workshops favourably distinguish folk social dance from other popular styles of couple dancing. When asked in interview, *‘what is the appeal of taking part in these activities?’* interviewees in both types of social dance were keen to compare their experiences, and occasionally only their impressions, with events involving other types of couple dance. Most emphasised the different social attitudes of other groups, in particular attitudes of inclusiveness, friendliness and acceptance, formality and social hierarchy. Frank, for example, has experienced a variety of dance styles in the past, and sees folk social dancing as a route to greater sociability:

. . . so you know it's, it's not just like going to a rock 'n' roll dance where you don't know anyone, going there sitting and dancing with your partner all night . . . it is very sociable. (Frank, 20/04/12)

Other dancers described Jive as a dancing style that is less social and more prescriptive than Cajun and Zydeco, while Lindy Hop was regarded as less inclusive and accepting. The most common comparisons, however, were with Salsa and particularly with Ballroom Dancing. Dave came to Scandinavian dance having been involved with Ballroom Dancing for a number of years:

The Ballroom Dancing world was much more solitary, you didn't change partners, you took your partner because the partner was all important. The practice had grown up that you danced with your partner all evening, which is fine, but it is different, and because it is such a difficult skill with such huge gradations of ability, there is a lot of remarks of what a person's ability is. So it's not at all so welcoming, it's not so open, it's not so fluid, it's just a very different world. (Dave, 07/02/12)

Anne compared Ballroom Dancing to Cajun and Zydeco:

The reason that I like Cajun is that it is laid-back, it is relaxed, you know . . . and I could never, ever do Ballroom Dancing; it is far too strict, I couldn't bear that, I don't like the formality of it. (Anne, 09/04/12)

Diane found that it was the way that involvement in Salsa was organised, and in particular the learning environment, that she found difficult, and that it was unsatisfactory in teaching her things about Salsa dancing that are important to her:

I didn't like the way the man was teaching us; he seemed to be quite critical, and also we were only dancing to records and so we were only going over and over things, so there wasn't any sort of social aspect to it, and the music wasn't in any way interesting because it was just a record. I got no sense of what Salsa dancing was really like, or the atmosphere of Salsa dancing, or Latin American dancing, so I got nothing out of it, it just felt negative. (Diane, 07/02/12)

She compared this with her introduction to Cajun dancing:

. . . (Cajun) is really quite a creative way of dancing, and is not a precious way of dancing whereas the Salsa dancing seemed to be very precious, and very precise . . . you have to be really, really very precise and people do not want to dance with you if you can't do it, so as a beginner it is a real problem. (Diane, 07/02/12)

Diane voices a common belief in the value of live music to participants, and the importance of the relaxed informality of the learning environment, where the focus of enjoyment is the social rather than the dance.

John has a very broad experience of different types of social dance, and has taken part in Scandinavian dance, but is mostly involved in Cajun and Zydeco:

The ballroom crowd are more conservative and reserved, and they don't change partners and, yes, they like their conventionality more, whereas; well, Tango dances can be very stuffy and . . . some are just up their own arse, but Cajun, I generally find that people are just there, just to have fun. (John, 29/02/12)

Clearly, those looking retrospectively at their dance experience can perceive their participation in Cajun or Scandi as having distinct advantages and benefits to them when compared to other dance styles. However, the styles of couple dancing in this study receive little in the way of media attention, and often, potential participants

have little to go on other than impressions of other styles of couple dancing, such as those above. First attendance at an event can therefore be something of a leap of faith, with accompanying expectations and trepidation built on such impressions.

Kath recalled preparing for her first visit to a Cajun and Zydeco event:

. . . it was like a really big deal . . . we were so nervous about going in there . . . we sat in the car and had about six cigarettes each before we went in, because we were; what if people say we can't do it properly and make us go home; and so eventually we plucked up courage and we went in, and people asked us to dance. We were awful and they would ask us again, and they were just so nice and so gracious and so friendly. (Kath, 09/04/12)

Phil identified these preconceptions as being, in part, due to a very British attitude:

. . . well they all reckon the British are too polite, and too used to sitting and watching an artist, you know, like a country music club, you know, you don't dance, you watch the artist. (Phil, 24/05/12)

Like Kath above, on attending her first event, Steph was also surprised at the breaking down of many of the barriers common in social life in the UK:

. . . there were loads of people there and they all kind of, came up and asked me to dance, which was a real surprise, I liked that because I had gone sort of expecting to, you know, get lost in the melee sort of thing. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Attending social dances at festivals and events is always described by participants as welcoming and friendly, and as an extension of what they found on attending workshops. Much of what has been learned in workshops outside of the physical movements of the dance is carried over into the social dances themselves. Kath had this to say:

. . . it's a really nice safe, friendly environment . . . to just go out and have a good time and you don't have to wear anything specific; you don't have to be of any particular social or financial background; you can ask anybody to dance because it is just about the dancing . . . (Kath, 09/04/12)

For dancers such as Kath and Steph, these social dance environments are understood to be places where they are freed from the social boundaries and



expectations that they usually encounter in their daily lives, and are therefore very important to them.

Perhaps the most significant difference between attending a workshop and attending a social dance is the palpable sense of occasion. There are few opportunities to attend these social dances, and there is an excited party-like atmosphere at most festivals and dances. Dancers waste little time in making the most of the occasion. Musician Andy experience of playing at a wide variety of events and remarks:

You go to Gloucester and people will sit around and they will wait until the band starts, and then suddenly bang, the dance floor is full of couples dancing, and you don't really see that in any other kind of genre really. (Andy, 10/07/12)

After a very short time, it is clear that there are dancers of various levels of expertise and skill on the dance floor; some flow, at one with the music and their dance partner, while others are hesitant and stiff, but all appear to follow the accepted codes of conduct, much of them learned at the workshops. The twin ideas of acceptance and inclusion are reinforced by the respect that dancers show for each other, as a jumble of dancers and moving bodies becomes a sociable, coordinated, and synchronised performance. At the end of each dance, there is much milling about as dancers seek out the next person to dance with. Some move to the side to take a break or to watch the band briefly, while others move on to the dance floor. It is common for almost everyone to be dancing at the same time, and sometimes it can be very crowded. Mike commented, when remembering a recent event he had attended:

. . . a couple of times at Malton, you looked around and there is nobody sat down, everybody got on the floor. (Mike, 21/06/12)

The interchange of partners has been introduced during workshops by asking participants to move around and dance with each other. Workshop attendees have experienced the social benefits of changing dance partners, and have also been introduced to the idea that this is a way to improve dancing technique. Diane enjoyed learning and meeting people to dance with at the workshops, but to her learning on the dance floor is equally important, she commented:

. . . there were others that are really good, that were prepared to really guide me and show me what to do, and I learnt a lot from them as much as from the lessons [workshops], so it was the manner in which I was allowed to get better that was very appealing, a much more attractive way of learning how to dance than doing formal lessons. (Diane, 07/02/12)

Dave has more dance experience, but recognises the value of dancing socially in this way:

. . . oh, the quality of my dancing has improved. I no longer just dance with one partner, so the quality of my experience with a whole range of partners is much better, varied, obviously up and down but, much better . . . (Dave, 06/02/12)

For those who do not think of themselves as beginners and have been involved in social dance for a number of years, it is accepted that dancers of all levels of experience dance together, dissolving the social hierarchy that some dislike in other forms of couple dance. Helen prefers learning on the dance floor, and dances with beginners, remembering that she too was a beginner once, she comments

I don't mind dancing with them because [when I was starting off] someone else has danced with me. I don't even remember when I first started, but obviously I must have gotten it somewhere. (Helen, 07/02/12)

In the same way that workshops proved to be welcoming and friendly, the attitude at events is also inclusive and accepting, and these qualities are very much valued. The principle of inclusion is strongly adhered to, not only creating a dynamic social atmosphere but also having other positive effects. The regular interchange of partners for example, addresses and compensates for any gender imbalances that may occur at these events, and means that while there may not be a dance partner available for the current dance, there is likely to be one for subsequent dances.

Diane enjoys this aspect of participation:

There is a real social aspect in that it feels like a discreet group activity which we really enjoy, but it's also easy to dance with everyone; the code of conduct is really easy. It's possible for anyone to ask anyone to dance, and that makes it a very easy social activity. (Diane, 07/02/12)

Changing dance partners is not obligatory, and there are a small number of couples who choose to dance the majority or even all of the dances together, and this too is accepted. The inclusive approach also means that it is not necessary to arrive at an event or festival with a dance partner in order to be included in the dancing, and it is not unusual for participants to attend on their own. Phil recalls his own early days of attending festivals:

. . . I think it was 2001 at Gloucester when I, you know had a bit of confidence. I think a woman tapped me on shoulder, and I had a dance, but I focused that much on me feet at the time, I didn't watch where we were going and . . . I banged into so many people there, that she was glad to get rid of me in the end, you know, because you're supposed to watch where you're going aren't you . . . but I mean after that ya get the confidence up, and nobody ever refuses you do they really. I mean even, even if they sat with a partner you know, and you ask her to dance it's not a problem is it? (Phil, 24/05/12)

Compared with their experience of other dance styles or social settings, women in particular mentioned this inclusivity as an important factor in their participation. For Anne this is a very important aspect of her involvement:

That is the thing about going as a woman on your own, that's what's okay . . . go to Salsa classes for example, which I have tried and it didn't do it for me, I get the feeling that unless you have got a regular partner, it's not going to be so much fun; it is very much more focused on couples. (Anne, 09/04/12)

The lack of social formality and rigid codes of conduct when compared with other forms of social dance is very appealing to most participants. In particular, it is important to most women participants, that it is equally acceptable for men or women to approach someone for a dance, as this frees women of a number of social pressures, such as to attend events with a male partner, and it normalises their independence. Steph talked about feeling at ease at these dances and about being happy to go to events on her own, when recounting her early participation in Cajun and Zydeco:

Everybody was lovely and friendly there was none of the, you know, if you go out on your own as a woman you might get preyed upon; there might be a

cattle market kind of thing; 'is she available'; none of that at all. People just danced with you, you went back to your seat or went and danced with somebody else; and I felt perfectly safe and independent and welcome.  
(Steph, 14/05/12)

The creation of a safe and non-threatening environment is possible because these ways of behaving and thinking are established into practice, for both men and women, in any of the workshops that they attend. These are then reinforced and established by experienced participants on the dance floor at events and festivals. Phil can also see the benefits of this:

I mean there's the friendliness of it and the fact that, you know, people dance with everybody, and it's not, it's not a threat you know. I mean women go on their own and they go just to dance. And a lot of them do have partners at home that are happy for them to go. (Phil, 24/05/12)

For some dancers such as Mike, without this understanding he would find it difficult attending these events:

. . . the opportunity I get to dance with lots of different people would perhaps not be quite the same if I had a regular partner with my wife. So I suppose I am quite fortunate really, there are others similar; I have met one or two other guys and women where their spouse doesn't see it [dancing] the same as them, but they understand the need to go off and, and to dance. (Mike, 21/06/12)

The attitudes of inclusiveness and acceptance are evident in other aspects of social relations within the groups who practice these two dance styles. There are, for example, participants who are socially awkward, and managing social relationships can be a challenge for some participants. Dave was open about the thing that he finds most challenging about folk social dancing:

It doesn't matter to me what the dance is, I'm going to do it, and when I start moving I am going to feel it straight away . . . I don't find the dancing difficult, I find asking people to dance very difficult, so getting tongue tied when I'm asking people to dance . . . (Dave, 07/02/12)

There are also individuals who have difficulty in terms of bodily awareness, proprioception, or simply their physique; however, this does not exclude them from taking part. John shared this observation;

. . . there is one guy and I don't think he is autistic, but he is very big and tall and doesn't talk much, and he is a bit slow in his movements, but you can guarantee that he is dancing most of the night, all of the girls will dance with him, and he is fully accepted. There is some very odd characters there, [but] I find they all get fully accepted, which is very good. (John, 29/02/12)

One event organiser also affectionately commented:

I think a lot of people actually do like the very accepting social contact, because we do draw some decidedly odd people in at times, and there is a great deal of acceptance in the dancing community about people's funny little ways. (June, 22/08/11)

Such individuals may have interpersonal or social difficulties more generally, and are therefore noticeable because of apparent difficulties in navigating these novel social relationships; however, this is rarely a barrier to their involvement. June adds that the types of social relationships involved in couple social dance can be greatly beneficial:

. . . it is a very good way to meet people, but it is also a very good way to get in physical contact with people, and I think that that does actually matter quite a lot, because there are not many social events that you can go to, and as X once said to somebody . . . 'where else can you meet a beautiful woman and put your arms around her immediately on meeting her'. (June, 22/08/11)

Inclusion and acceptance are not limited to the behaviour on the dance floor, as participants form a diverse social group. An observation that many participants have made, is that what an individual does in order to earn a living rarely comes into conversations, and is considered relatively unimportant. Where a person lives is more frequently of interest, however, because this can be useful, for example, in organising local activities, and sharing information or transport. Diane finds this aspect of taking part very appealing:

There seems to be no discrimination on age grounds or social grounds, so it is an interesting mix for me. It doesn't matter who anybody is, what their background is, what their jobs are or their marital status, it doesn't matter, everyone is just there because they enjoy the music, they enjoy the dancing, it is a very non-judgemental environment. (Diane, 07/02/12)

The nature of participation in these social dance settings does encourage a great deal of mixing, and there appears to be no observable discrimination beyond the likes and dislikes based on the personality of individuals. However, while there are no clear attempts at discrimination, the overt profile of those who attend, in terms of age, socio-economic status, sexuality, ethnicity, class, could keep away certain sectors of society, and as in many such circumstances, those who may feel excluded are hard to find. The sentiments expressed in Diane's statement are certainly the intention of those involved, and one organiser stressed that participants are generally very tolerant but that she would consider the interest and enjoyment of the majority before she actively excluded someone from attending one of her events.

The research participants described that any such barriers appear to be 'left at the door', as their primary interest is in taking part in the music and the dance. This diversity is echoed by Scandi dancer Jack, who suggested that even though participants with a common interest may be of a similar type, he asserted that they are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds:

I think people are accepting, and what I said about you meet the same type of people, well you also don't, you also meet people who you would never talk to, you know, so yeah, it does work both ways really. (Jack, 26/08/11)

For John, being able to mix with people from a variety of backgrounds is very important and indicates a healthy social environment:

the particular grab of Cajun and Zydeco I think is it's very eclectic, you get all sorts of people there, a very mixed bag of people and they are there to have fun and to dance . . . everyone dances with everyone and no one give a [gestures]; they are just there to have fun . . . that's what gets me, there is excitement, it gets the heart pumping, you don't have to think about it, just have fun and share, and I love it. (John, 29/02/12)

Participants have described their involvement in both Cajun and Scandi folk social dance groups as taking part in a very particular type of music-based collectivity, which involves much more than participating in the music and the dance. However, these events have been shown to be accepting and inclusive, qualities which are often common in other music events, such as festivals, and where people come together to share a common interest.

These descriptions of participation in Cajun and Scandi give an indication of the nature of taking part, which many of those involved describe as being immersive. It is in many ways similar to descriptions of other types of folk orientated music and leisure activities. Ruth Finnegan for example, describes the relaxed atmosphere of a folk club, and how ‘an evening session involved a high level of participation from those present’ (Finnegan 1989; p. 59). She adds that the music was intimate in presentation, and that socially the environment was open and familiar, with artists mingling with their audience before or after their performance. She also observed that there was informal and friendly social mixing, and women felt comfortable attending. This description of a folk club shares much in common with these social dance groups, however, the immersive nature of the experience of folk social dance events, is largely due to its performance context. Turino’s views about performance context were discussed earlier in Chapter 2 and, like many other folk practices, the performance context of the folk club that Finnegan describes is presentational, while these folk social dances are instead participatory (Turino 2008). With the latter, rather than the musicians being involved as performers for an audience of dancers, the dancers themselves are involved in a performance with the musicians. Indeed, there is no distinction between musicians and dancers as their involvement is equal and complimentary, as musician Amanda put it:

it is the close harmonies of two people playing that I was addicted to, and then the combination of actually seeing people dance to the music, so it’s like three-dimensional music, it’s just very exciting for me. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

Furthermore, it is understood that people attend these social dance events in order to take part and not to watch, and at many venues, it is difficult to be a spectator in the same way as in presentational performance (Turino 2008) as there is often no provision to watch the musicians on stage. Seating for example is arranged around

the edge of the dance floor, maximising the space available for dancing, making the view of the stage area obscured by dancers. For the vast majority of time this seating is used more as a place to put coats, bags and drinks, than for sitting on. Participation is therefore built in, and there is no audience, as the following two participants recall:

at a Cajun dance you won't find many people at any one time not dancing, whereas with any other dances and any other place you go to, you find 50% sitting out or 20% sitting out, but with the Cajun you don't find many people, maybe 5% if you are lucky, sitting down at any one time, because they can't get a partner usually. (Lyn, 20/04/12)

I mean when I used to go with X . . . X never danced, and it became; he stopped going because people used to try and get him up to dance and he used to just want to sit and watch the band. (Phil, 24/05/12)

Tom suggests that having no audience contributes to the relaxed atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance, as dancers do not feel they are under scrutiny or that they have to perform:

. . . there are some points of style about it, depending upon what the dance is, but still being loads of fun, and in a group of people some will be doing it better than others and that doesn't matter, because you are not putting on a performance for an audience. Most of the time you all try to do it right, some of you will be more successful than others. (Tom, 07/02/12)

The fact that there is no audience plays a major role in creating a sense of involvement and unity, and therefore in creating a unifying temporary social environment. Jim talked about his view on the practice of these festivals, concluding that:

it's an expression of the soul, it's an expression of love in a way, you know, love for humanity, love for the music, love for the dance, the enjoyment of being together, and the sense of community. (Jim, 29/02/12)

The values of inclusiveness and acceptance demonstrated at events are also built into the fabric of participation on an organisational level. For example, financial



concessions for tickets are made available to those who are unemployed or on a low income, and strategies are often developed to make participation as accessible as possible. Volunteer stewards are an essential component in the running of an event, performing a variety of functions in exchange for a free ticket or a reduction in the price of a festival ticket. This has become common practice for folk festivals and music festivals in other genres<sup>26</sup>, providing a cheap labour force but also opening up participation to a wider range of people, especially those on low incomes.

This description of participation in social dance events, serves to highlight how the atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion cultivated at dance workshops is carried over into social dances themselves, and how this serves as a foundation for attitudes and behaviour on the dance floor. Participants report that a supportive, safe, and non-threatening environment is created, of a type that they find immersive and have not experienced in other similar social settings. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the current practice of these dance styles as participatory dance, came about as a result of specific circumstances, and this led them to be organised very differently to how they had been at any time previously. The use of volunteer stewards mentioned above, increases inclusiveness and accessibility, but is not the only example of the way in which participatory values have been built into the way that events and activities are organised and managed, and this will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### Give and Take - generosity and participation

The circumstances in which the dance practice of Cajun and Scandi came to be organised as participatory, has been discussed in Chapter 2, along with how these practices came to be organised by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts. The small number of people involved, however, meant that these styles of folk dance could not be organised within the environment of commercial enterprise, so an alternative way to organise was found. As a means to ensure the continuation of these practices, an

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<sup>26</sup> For example, over 400 volunteers were used at *Sidmouth Folk Week* 2013 and the same year, 250 volunteers were used at another major folk festival, the *Towersey Village Festival*, held over August bank holiday weekend 2013. Festivals in other genres and larger overseas festivals are highly dependent on volunteers; 3000 volunteers were used at the weeklong SXSW, music and film festival in Austin, Texas, 1,800 volunteers at *Sundance*, which takes place in Utah (Guardian 2014).

organisational model has evolved where the aim is for each event to pay for itself, with a small profit that could be used as security to ensure future events. This change of emphasis, however, had far-reaching consequences, which at the time, participants could not have predicted. It could be argued that the qualities of acceptance, inclusiveness, and supportiveness discussed so far, can be found in many social groups who share a common interest or practice, however, in these groups where profit is removed from the organisational equation, other complimentary qualities emerge.

It is widely acknowledged amongst participants that festivals and events are not commercial moneymaking ventures, and as a result, this fosters a very supportive and generous attitude towards their organisation and management. This complements the attitudes of acceptance and inclusion discussed in the previous section, increasing a sense of involvement and generating a spirit of goodwill among the majority of participants. Often, for example, there are small tasks that need to be taken care of, which aid the smooth running of an event, and participants help where they can, sometimes taking the initiative themselves; a room has to be tidied, or chairs moved, or help is needed in moving equipment. John has observed:

. . . (often) there's lots of jobs that need doing and people just do them, something just gets done, so there is a very sharing and giving nature, I think, amongst the dancers, but I think musicians as well. (John, 29/02/12)

Participants are generally very cooperative and happy to help out as an act of appreciation and thanks for being able to take part in these events. Jack describes why he felt supportive of these types of events:

You know, there is lovely music, and it's all very, very cheap, you don't feel like anyone is making a profit off you, you don't feel any bitterness, you feel nothing but grateful. (Jack, 26/08/11)

Dancers are also very grateful for, and greatly value the live music that they dance to, and this will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. However, dancers consider the musicians who play for dance, to be very generous in sharing music with them in this way. Some musicians are paid for their skills but where this does happen, rarely are large sums of money involved, and the fact that they are paid is

generally not considered important by other participants, and does not separate them from involvement in the group generally. Dance tutors are also occasionally paid but the majority are not, and dancers enjoy sharing their skills and also learning from dancers that are more experienced. Many tutors are very happy to pass on their skills, as dance tutor Mike explains:

Occasionally people would say, you know, can you teach us; I always thought, you know, it's the right thing to pass it on, thinking there must be plenty of people like me saying 'I want to do that dancing', so I have always looked at it from that angle, that side. I know that is how I came across it and I would like to be encouraged if I was coming new to it, so I have done quite a number of workshops. (Mike, 21/06/12)

It is well known and understood by participants that these events are only made possible because of the time and energy that enthusiastic individuals generously commit to organising them. In most cases there is one person who is the driving force and does all, or the majority of the work. Following an event, one participant commented about the organiser:

. . . he did have to do it pretty well single-handedly, pretty well, and a lot of hard work; he did a lot of the physical stuff himself . . . I think it surprised a lot of people that it was pulled off to the degree it was. (Anon)

One organiser described the commitment that is involved in managing one of the well-established events:

I am about 14 months usually ahead . . . (and) I do, do absolutely everything . . . booking of the bands, arranging their accommodation, flights, I do everybodys' tickets and everything like that. . . (but) the tickets don't go on sale until two months before the event, and when they do its just manic, I mean it's really hard work. I come home from work, I get home at about half five and I sit there until midnight, pretty much every night, but that's only a couple of months a year. (Anon)

The motivation for this commitment and perceived generosity is summed up simply with the following statement from the same organiser:

. . . what's better than being able to share something that you love with other people, and it's [the work] interesting and varied and wonderful. (Anon)

This exemplifies the statement that events are organised by enthusiasts for enthusiasts, and participants have a very high regard for the principle that all of these events and activities are run on a not-for-profit basis, which is another aspect of this perceived generosity. As well as the time and energy that organisers put into these events, there is also an amount of financial risk involved. Mike has organised dance workshops:

. . . you sometimes find that you are funding things a bit to some extent . . . [but] then maybe perhaps there is a bit left over, but you put that into next time. (Mike, 21/06/12)

Another organiser explained:

I think anybody that does something like that, you have to be prepared to underwrite it somehow, and it is just one of those risks you take. (Anon)

An organisational model that is dependent on the generosity of dedicated individuals has become the only way that participants can ensure a future for these types of events. The decline in interest in Cajun and Zydeco music as it became unfashionable, encouraged mostly dance enthusiasts to organise festivals and events so that they could continue going to these types of dances. In almost all cases, this involved individuals financially underwriting the first event, as Phil explained:

The first festival they had at Bristol, X put a thousand pound in to get it going, and you know who Y is don't you . . . yeah well, everyone knows Y. Well he put five hundred in, you know, just to get it going, and a couple of other people. And it was; they made a little profit and X got his thousand pound back, and they made a little, but obviously in the beginning you need some capital. (Phil, 24/05/12)

The same is true of Scandi events where also, commonly, it is one enthusiastic individual who takes the initiative. Funds from one annual dance event are also used to support another event that may be more expensive to put on, as is the case

with money from the annual dance at Tideswell, which in the past has been used to support the larger Scandimoot event held later in the year. There is always a financial risk in putting on an event, and this organiser sums up the financial approach by nearly all event organisers:

Originally when I had to, I underwrote it . . . (but) I always aim to break even . . . I have managed to keep it always in the black, and it's always made a little bit, not a lot, but it has always made a little bit, and so over the years I have actually made a sort of buffer that I have never ever touched, and I am not going to. (Anon)

Financial insecurity is in particular a concern when a new event is starting up, and organisers often work towards building up funds in order to create a safety net and get off to a good start. One of the organisers recalled the fundraising activities they ran when they were getting their event off the ground, holding special dinners, raffles and:

We did things like jumble sales and things like that . . . a couple of jumble sales which were really hard work. We didn't make a lot of money to be honest but we made some; a lot of effort went into it. (Anon)

Talking about the same event, another event organiser spoke admiringly of their hard work:

They did an absolute humongous amount of fund raising beforehand, and also they got an awful lot of sponsorship because they worked so hard for it. (Anon)

Organisers usually have a number of supporters locally who volunteer their time and often their own resources for the benefit of an up-and-coming festival. With increasing pressure on the financing of these events due to rising costs, nearly all festivals have additional fundraising at the event itself, usually in the form of a raffle or similar activity, run by participants on behalf of the event.

The involvement of participants in the running of events, and the organisation of additional fundraising, are a direct consequence of the not-for-profit organisational model. In addition, the knowledge that events are managed on this basis,

irrespective of the history or the reason why this may be the case, leads to the perception by participants of the generosity of those involved with organising. The attitudes of people to activities 'charitably' organised in this way, and from which they can see themselves benefiting, are considerably different to when organisation and participation are detached, such as for example; the dichotomies of artist-audience (Turino 2008), manager-clientele, commodity-market. Participants are not considering 'value for money', or any competitive intent in their involvement, and are accepting, cooperative, and supportive. With profit removed, the organisation of participatory dance therefore fosters involvement in the wider issues to do with the running of events and activities, and participation involves more than participation in the dance alone. The organisation of events as not-for-profit encourages unity of purpose, an interest in the smooth running and success of events, and the sustainability of the practice.

### A Network of Temporary Communities

The unity described thus far has been expressed in terms of certain attributes of involvement, such as supportive, friendly, inclusive, accepting, immersive, all words that those interviewed used when discussing the appeal of involvement. However, a further group of words used, describes their involvement more globally. The vocabulary used here contains an assortment of terms, which imply kinship, sharing, and cooperation. Participants in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandi, describe their social environment as having a strong sense of mutuality and as being immersive, and that each festival or event as one in which they help to create a unique occasion.

Each festival, taking place over a weekend or in some cases longer, witnesses the construction of a unique social entity as a temporary community. Scandi dancer Jack, reflects on this and comments:

. . . so you are part of this little fraternity I suppose, especially weekends like Tideswell . . . you are part of this ideal community, where everyone pulls their weight to clean and clear . . . (Jack, 26/08/11)

An earlier study of folk social dance festivals at a remote Tudor castle on the Welsh borders (Kiddy 2008), showed that the contained physical space of the festival,

resulted in an immersive feeling of involvement and strong bonds between individuals. This can lead to an intense experience of community and involvement, which may be viewed as an escape from the stresses of participants' everyday life. Participants in that study likened arriving at these festivals to entering such fantasy worlds as Narnia<sup>27</sup>, or Alice's Wonderland<sup>28</sup>, and participants in Cajun and Scandi expressed similar sentiments. Diane for example, earlier described participation as *very non-judgemental*, later suggested that the festival environment is separate from everyday life and a respite from it, a different world:

. . . it's not an ideal world or anything, but it is just a world where a lot of the normal calls, judgement calls don't exist. (Diane, 07/02/12)

It has been shown that there are specific ways of both organising and understanding participation, and that these serve as a model for practice, for both weekend festivals and other shorter events. Annual events taking place over one day, for example, generally also follow these familiar arrangements, beginning with workshops and culminating in a social dance, and involvement entails the same practices and behaviours. These types of events commonly attract a loyal following who attend year after year, and through this familiarity of organisation and patronage, as with weekend festivals, a temporary community is created and rekindled each year. Special events are organised, such as for the celebration of a participant's birthday, and most often an open invitation is extended to all fellow participants and enthusiasts, and members of this broader community. These one-off events will include a wider spectrum of attendees, and many who have little inherent interest in the music and dance, but they are also generally organised in this familiar way in order to evoke this sense of community. Steph's first occasion of attending a Cajun and Zydeco dance was one such event, at a village hall close to where she lived. She recalls:

. . . and I thought, well these people are really kind of dedicated to what they like, it's almost like a community that isn't a live-together community, but a community, and they are so open to other people. (Steph, 14/05/12)

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<sup>27</sup> *The Chronicles of Narnia* written by Clive S. Lewis, a series of seven books written between 1949 and 1954

<sup>28</sup> *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* written by Charles Dodgson, in 1865

This quote reinforces many of the attributes and qualities described earlier, and is an astute observation of two ways in which the notion of community is conceptualised by participants. Temporary communities are created at events and festivals organisationally, and these are supported through the behaviours of participants. In addition, however, these temporary communities are seen as parts of a much larger entity, sometimes referred to as the larger community but more regularly as a social network, and I shall discuss each of these terms in turn.

Music scholars have used a number of terms in which to address groups of people who are involved in music-based collectivity such as these, and many of these have been discussed in the literature review to this thesis. The term community, however, has been given priority here, because this term had the strongest resonance with those participants who were interviewed when discussing their involvement. Generally, the word 'community' has positive associations with the types of things that give us meaning in life when we associate with other people. Our relationships with children, family, and friends are all linked with community, together with feelings of belonging and being loved. Being part of a community therefore has warm and comfortable connotations, and promotes a feeling of having a place and a purpose in the world, where people depend on us and we depend on other people. Traditionally community has been assumed to be both stable and located (cf. Maclver and Page 1950; Tonnies 1957; Vitek and Jackson 1996). However, the notion of community has become flexible and, when used in a number of contexts, has various connotations, and can be used to mean very different things. A dictionary definition of community as, 'a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common' (Stevenson 2010; p. 350) does not help to reveal the significance of the term when used in the context of these social dance groups. The use of the word by participants in folk social dance is therefore problematic, because it does not for example, apply to a specific location, as events are held in many locations throughout the UK and participants are also very dispersed. The notion of community for these participants can therefore be best understood by looking at what they say is the appeal of taking part, and at the attributes and qualities of participation that they have described when discussing their involvement in this community.



In recent work searching for the meaning of Community, Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito has uncovered a notion of the word that is radically different to those that have gone before (Esposito 2010; pp. 3 - 7), and that is particularly relevant to the use of the word by participants in these groups. Esposito has examined the etymology of the two components of the Latin term *communitas*, from which the word community is derived, and their meaning. The first, *commun*, that which is common, is agreed among scholars, as something that belongs to more than one, or that is collective. It is the second component *manus* that is open to interpretation, and which leads Esposito to differ with other notions of community. The term *manus*, has social connotations to do with obligation in terms of duty and gift, where there is gift giving and reciprocal gift giving, but with no expectation of an equal gift in return. However, this is also “giving something that one can *not keep* for oneself and over which, therefore, one is not completely master’ (*sic*, *ibid.* p. 5). Esposito’s understanding of the notion of community, is about an appreciation of a kind of relationship where we are united with the other, by each giving while not expecting anything in return, but where through our very presence and involvement in social contact with the other, we are unable to not give. There is therefore no community where individuals are isolated, and have no association or involvement with others, even when that lack of involvement may be commonly agreed. The gift we are giving in community is that of mutual association with other people. Community therefore comes about through enjoying this reciprocal gift giving in the pursuit of a common interest and goal. It follows therefore, that the greater the involvement in a group, the greater the sense of community, and this is demonstrated in the above comments from participants when they compare their contact with other social dance groups that they suggest do not share these qualities.

Esposito’s suggested meaning of community helps us to understand the ideas of community expressed by participants in these two social groups, through their descriptions of participation, and their statements about the appeal of taking part. This can be understood as a combination of both social and organisational habits that have evolved in the formation of contemporary practice. There is an abundance of gift giving from initial introduction to the social group, seen particularly at beginners’ workshops, but also at events, where participants describe friendliness and inclusiveness, and this continues through all levels of participation. Acceptance,

support, and a lack of formality and social hierarchy, demonstrated through the interchange of partners and relative parity of those involved, are gifts that greatly enhance the sense of community and of a safe environment. Nowhere is this idea of community supported more strongly, however, than in the reciprocal sharing and generosity that those involved identify with. Individuals' financial underwriting of events; the running of events as not-for-profit; organisers and volunteers donating their time; musicians and dance tutors sharing their skills; individuals' fund-raising activities; these are the substantive manifestations of the gift giving that is at the heart of Esposito's definition of community.

The factors described so far that are the building blocks for a sense of community for participants at events and festivals, are linked to a wider view of community built on familiarity but also on less tangible associations. John refers to many levels of familiarity when he says:

The dance world is very welcoming . . . it is like we are a family that meet four times a year, and then at other odd places, and we all just slot in together.  
(John, 29/02/12)

The particular way in which events are organised and understood by participants that has already been discussed, allows participants a level of security, as their expectations are easily met and they 'slot in together'. There is therefore no difficulty in turning up to an event, as this familiarity enhances the warm and comfortable feelings of a temporary community. For both of these groups, there is also a 'dance calendar', which includes a number of such events that are at the same venue, and at the same time each year. This cycle of familiar events therefore provides constancy and predictability that gives these groups long-term stability. Furthermore, each event attracts a loyal following of enthusiastic musicians and dancers, and many of these often travel great distances to attend an event. In these groups, it is therefore possible, for example, to see some of the same people at an event in Bristol and one in Yorkshire. This is illustrated very clearly by the following quotes from Cajun participants, as Steph found:

So I asked a few people how did you know about this, because you know the usual thing, where did you come from, expecting that they lived locally. And they would go, Exeter or Plymouth or Kent or Manchester or whatever, and I

said how the heck did you know that this little obscure thing, in this place, was going on in this place, and they said, 'we have our own network' . . . we would travel anywhere for Cajun music. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Musicians who can play for dance can be hard to come by, so it is no surprise that many of them travel a considerable distance in order to play, and the view from the stage for Cajun musician Andy, provides a well-qualified perspective:

It is a network and they travel, they will travel far and wide, like you get people who will do dance instruction down in deepest darkest Devon and the Cornish border, and then you have got a Cajun do in Derby and suddenly there they are, yes they travel these Cajun bods [dancers]. (Andy, 10/07/12)

As discussed in the previous chapter, travel by UK enthusiasts is not restricted to within this country; it is also common for dancers and musicians in both of these social groups to travel to festivals in other parts of Europe. This sense of familiarity is therefore not limited by geographical boundaries:

. . . they travel from all over England, and some from abroad, and you get to know that crowd. I guarantee that if I went to France to a Cajun Festival or Holland . . . you will meet people that you know there. (John, 29/02/12)

. . . and of course we also know the French, the Belgians, the Dutch the Germans, because they all come over here as well as us going over there. (Frank, 20/04/12)

There is therefore a wider community, which Lyn described as her 'extended family' (Lyn, 20/04/12), but as has already been seen, many refer to this as a network.

Participation in Scandi events, although attracting fewer participants, has a similar profile, attracting musicians and dancers who also travel a considerable distance. Earlier, Scandi musician Maggie also referred to a 'network of people' (Maggie, 07/02/12) involved as musicians and dancers. The annual Scandi festival *Scandimoot*, in 2012 for example, attracted people from relatively close by in north Yorkshire, as well as participants from London, Lancaster, the north east, and the south west of England, as well as from France, Belgium and Germany, to receive music and dance instruction delivered by tutors from the Dalarna region of Sweden.

These different levels of familiarity come together to produce a coherence, which not only encompasses the temporary communities of each festival and event but also, through associations and consistency, a broader notion of community that is commonly referred to by participants as a social network. This idea of community includes not only those present at a particular event, but also a cross-referencing of participants at other events. This is not simply a community of interest, as in a second dictionary definition of community, which is when community is used as a mass noun, as in a sense of 'the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common' (Stevenson 2010; p. 350). This broader community is much more than this, because it also includes a commitment to the attributes referenced by these temporary communities of events, those of being supportive, friendly, inclusive, and accepting which demonstrate sharing, and cooperation, and where relationships between people are looser and more fluid.

## Conclusion

The sustained interest of participants in these dance styles is testimony to the continuing success of enthusiasts in maintaining a sense of community, as both a temporary community at events, and as a more stable, larger social network. Research at these music and dance events revealed that there are two primary features to this dynamic; firstly, the way in which events and activities are organised, and secondly, a common understanding of the social behaviours expected of participants. This is in addition to the underlying motivation, established in the previous chapter, where the focus for the majority of those who take part in these groups is the social, in folk social dance.

Viewed in organisational terms, each event may be represented structurally as a relatively flat hierarchy, where generally one person is responsible for decision-making, and in most cases does the majority of the work. These lead organisers can be easily identified with, by other participants as fellow enthusiasts, and are therefore able to gain their trust and support, thus promoting a sense of involvement and inclusion. This also places organisers closer to, if not directly in touch with, other participants; such that they can be responsive to the feedback they receive. In addition, as described in Chapter 2, the approach whereby events and activities are

run as not-for-profit undertakings is considered positively by participants. This organisational structure seems to foster engagement and acceptance which are constructive qualities that seem to result in affirmative relationships for all of those involved. These are positive aspects of participation that contribute to the emotional wellbeing of the individuals involved.

The sense of community is also supported by the behaviours of those involved, and their willingness to adopt particular attitudes, which participants reported as creating positive relationships between those taking part. The exercise of inclusion, acceptance, and generosity of spirit, that have been described, indicates that in this context, music and dance are the vehicle for participation in a social activity that promotes a sense of belonging and community. The sense of belonging is rooted in the various ways in which individuals experience participation, and the ways in which participants connect with each other in the practice of these styles of social dance, and it is this that I wish to move on to in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### A Delicate Dance – the experience of dance

I love the music. I haven't – I don't think that I have ever heard a Polska that I didn't like, and it does something to me, [pause] always . . . the feeling of excitement, and I must get up and dance, is much more intense when I listen to Swedish music . . . and the dancing, it just suits me, I have a bit of a theory that we all have the dance inside us that is our dance, or maybe we have two or three of them, but for some people they discover Tango, and that is their dance, and once they have discovered it they can't really go back to anything else . . . I discovered that couple dancing which involves working with and against my partner to get the balance exactly right and, to myself, move in a fluid and smooth and balanced way is what I love doing. I just love it when I can do that, I love doing it, it just makes me feel fantastic, and I think it just happens to be my dance [*she laughs*]. (June, 22/08/11)

There is no doubting June's passion for dancing, and in describing her own experience, she voices some common sentiments of many other dancers who participate in the dance events discussed in this thesis. This chapter discusses such descriptions of the dance experience and explores the significance and meaning of this experience to those involved. In the previous chapter, participation was described in terms of the sense of belonging that participants feel in their association with fellow members of the group. This expressed itself in terms of participants' involvement in a community and wider social network. I have argued that it is a generalised intersection of beliefs that bonds participants together in these groups and that defines their involvement and informs their conduct. There are therefore particular aspects of conduct which make up the web of social interaction in these groups in terms of a 'common-sense', or shared meaning, and these can be conceived of as, for example, an agreed understanding about inclusion and social

parity (cf. Stern 2004)<sup>29</sup>. While it is apparent that these aspects of participation are significant and meaningful in an abstract sense<sup>30</sup>, and part of what participants ‘buy into’ when joining the social group, participants also describe other reasons for their involvement as being meaningful to them in quite a different sense. These are described in terms of an affective response to the social, physical, and intellectual aspects of participation<sup>31</sup>. For many, these types of responses are the primary reason for taking part, and are central to their continued involvement in folk social dance groups. They therefore have a great deal of resonance as indicators of meaning to these participants.

In discussing the appeal and experience of participation in these dance styles with those involved, musicians and dancers talked about their own feelings, and those shared by others. Aspects of participation relating to individuals’ affective response can be difficult to pin down. One participant, being very aware of this, admitted that it was not easy for her to describe, and suggested that it was possibly *beyond words* (fn. 23/01/13). Many other participants during their interview or in conversation, reached a stage when describing the appeal of their involvement in this way, where they simply stated that *it is hard to explain*, or that *it is difficult to describe* (fn. 30/03/2011). A discussion such as this, based on the experiences of those individuals involved in the study, can therefore be problematic in many ways. For example, while a level of empathic experience can be expected in any group that pursues a common interest such as this, I do not wish to imply a common intersubjectivity or ‘oneness’ within the group. Each individual is in possession of their own unique response to this experience and may choose to express or articulate it in a variety of ways. There is, however, a degree of correspondence between what these individuals say about their involvement, and in this respect, it

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<sup>29</sup> If people share a common sense, then they share a definition of the situation, and shared cognition and consensus is essential in the shaping of our ideas and relations. Stern comes up with the term “Intersubjective consciousness” – ‘a form of reflectivity arising when we become conscious of our contents of mind by virtue of their being simultaneously reflected back to us by the mind of others’ (Stern 2004; p.xvi).

<sup>30</sup> For example, in a political or Ideological sense.

<sup>31</sup> The notion of affect is a concept which is often applied to the context of music, but is derived from Greek and Latin doctrines of rhetoric and oratory, and is an aesthetic concept originally referring to when a speaker moves the ‘affects’ or emotions of the listener (Buelow 2007). Affect therefore includes a variety of mental reactions and states such as feelings, emotions and moods, which would not generally be regarded as intellectual. It is generally agreed that ‘Music seems to elicit strong emotion more reliably and frequently than other art forms’ (Deutsch, et al. 2007), however, in this chapter the idea of affect is applied more broadly to also indicate the reactions of participants to many of these other aspects of taking part in these social settings.

can be discussed as a *shared* experience. With this in mind, the material gathered for this research suggests a number of themes that are common to many participants. A recurring idea in most interviews for example, has been the notion of 'connection', and, this is what embraces the themes that form the basis of the discussion in this chapter. This notion of connection, is eloquently articulated by Jim, a musician and dancer in Scandinavian folk social dance:

It's very pleasant to dance with a lovely dance partner . . . you can dance close, you can dance to beautiful music you can connect with the musicians, the musicians connect with the dancers, there is a romantic aspect to the dance and to the music there is a certain melancholia in certain, in some aspects of the music, and if you have spent time in Sweden, all of those emotions can be brought to the surface. (Jim, 29/02/12)

In the following chapter, I shall explore aspects of the experience of dancing folk social dance, as reported in interviews with musicians and dancers who take part in Cajun and Zydeco and Scandinavian folk social dance. These will be conceptualised as a number of connections made by the individuals involved based on the relationship of those taking part into four areas of practice; the music, the interaction of musicians and dancers, the style of the dance itself, and finally their dance partner. All of those who practice these styles of dance stated that it was a sense of emotional connection to the music, an affective response, which initially drew them to become interested and which stimulates their continued involvement, and this is the starting point of discussion in this chapter. The participatory performance created at events was described in Chapter 4 as being immersive and immediate, and the interaction between musicians and dancers is the next connection that will be explored. This will be discussed by looking at how participants describe the dynamics of the social environment created on and around the dance floor. Dancers also discussed their connections with the practice of the dance style itself, which often mirrors their relationship to the music, together with the working relationships that are created and recreated with their dance partners. Finally, the clearest connection is that between two dancers as they navigate and negotiate their dance together on the dance floor.



### Marmite music – connecting to the music

There is general agreement amongst both musicians and dancers that it was the music which inspired them, and that drew them into their particular style of folk music and social dance. Many dancers described their introduction to a style of dancing, through explaining their reaction on first hearing the music:

I love the music; it is the music what, that interested me first. (Vicki, 27/04/11)

I was just absolutely blown away by the music, it was so beautiful. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

I got into it because I absolutely love the music. (Kath, 09/04/12)

I started collecting music and CDs and listening to it, but that was just music, one could feel that it was dance music, but how you dance to it, I had no idea whatsoever, (Pete, 30/07/12)

. . . the music just blew me away. (Jack, 26/08/11)

I liked the music [*he smiles ironically*], I like the music, I like dancing, that's about it really. (Frank, 20/04/12)

Musicians gave similar accounts of their introduction to the music. Andy is a musician in a well established Cajun and Zydeco band with a very broad repertoire who play regularly for a variety of events:

It was about 1988 when I heard it for the first time. A friend of mine who plays the accordion was interested in forming a band and he gave me a tape . . . and it knocked me sideways, I thought, yeah this is it, this is what I like; and it's gone on from there really. (Andy, 10/07/12)

Maggie, a piano teacher who had not played her violin for some years, was inspired by Scandinavian music after coming across it by accident at a party:

. . . we went into someone's kitchen, heard all this Swedish music playing and I thought, I haven't played my fiddle for 35 years, because I was really rubbish at it, and I heard these fiddles and I thought ok, I don't care, I don't care how

bad I am I'm getting that fiddle out of the attic and I'm going to work these tunes out. (Maggie, 07/02/12)

Such feelings about the music often continue while participants are involved in these groups, apparently intensifying for some the more they take part. This may go some way to explain the loyalty, commitment, and continued involvement of some participants over many years. What the majority of participants expressed was an affective response to the music, which they described as being '*blown away*' or '*knocked sideways*'. Most participants explained further about this, although it was clear that members of both Cajun and Scandi groups differ dramatically, and offer contrasting views on how they talk about their music and how the music moves them.

Scandinavian folk music is largely fiddle based, and the agility and expressive qualities of the fiddle are often evident in the use of ornamentation and dynamics. A common theme in the description of the music by Scandi participants is that it is moody and wistful, Maggie for example commented:

. . . some of the Swedish music's really dark isn't it, and that's what I like really (Maggie, 07/02/12)

Jill uses the word '*bewitching*' to describe her feelings on first hearing the music that she later learned how to play. After more than ten years of playing Scandinavian music she goes on to imagine a potent romantic notion of her relationship to the music:

. . . well I actually; now this is going to sound really macabre, but you know when you listen to music and you maybe you have had too many glasses [of wine], and you get a little bit melancholy, and you think, [*intake of breath*] if anything happen to me god forbid, I want this played at my funeral. Isn't that a dreadful thing to say . . . I'm not; I don't want to create some image . . . its more just; this music is so meaningful and so beautiful . . . and it matters to me, and I want you to hear it, and I want you to, maybe to connect [to] it . . . (Jill, 01/02/12)

Her statement is indicative of how for many, the music stirs a deeply visceral and emotional response, which Tom expressed more simply;

Swedish music gets me in here [*gestures to his chest*] that much more than any other music does, I am not quite sure why . . . (Tom, 07/02/12)

In contrast, Cajun and Zydeco music are portrayed as energetic and light hearted, and when asked why people get involved in Cajun and Zydeco, a typical response is;

I think it's because it's fun. (Anne, 09/04/12)

and

. . . if we are not having fun we have got it wrong (Kath, 09/04/12)

*Fun* is often the key word used by many participants to describe both their participation and the music itself. Frank has been attending these events since they first became popular, and explains this in terms of the energy of this style of music, comparing it with other dance styles he has experienced:

I think the thing is if you go to Salsa or Jive and you look around the room, you won't see too many people tapping their feet to the music and such like. With the Cajun beat, everybody is, whether they are dancing or not they can't stop moving to it. (Frank, 20/04/12)

Others expressed the upbeat and spirited feelings they get from the music:

It is happy music that is why. If somebody says 'what is Cajun?' then I always say it is happy music . . . (Jenny, 28/05/12)

I love the music and I do find it quite addictive Cajun, and the thing is it's either yes or no, people love it or hate it . . . if it's danced well it's really nice . . . it's very jolly usually. (Helen, 07/02/12)

Although the feelings expressed by participants in Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance are very different, there is a great deal of similarity in how participants' express their relationship to the music in these social settings. Those who have a wider experience of social dance generally speak in terms of only wanting to dance to music that they really like, with such comments as '*the music speaks to me*' (Jack, 26/08/11). Vicki was sure of her feelings about this:

I think however nice the dancing was, if I didn't like the music, if the music didn't move me, didn't do something to me, then I wouldn't want to dance to it . . . I always want to move when I listen to music that I like. (Vicki, 27/04/11)

Mike is equally certain, that it was the type of music that determined the type of dance for him:

For me it was a question of the music, hearing the music and loving the music, and then seeing the dancing with an in-built sort of desire to dance anyway. (Mike, 21/06/12)

While for Kath, dancing to Cajun and Zydeco seemed to be inevitable once she had heard the music:

I like doing the dancing because I like dancing, and it's obviously my favourite kind of music, so that's the one I really like to dance to. (Kath, 09/04/12)

Many participants find that they have a strong emotional connection with the music, and that the music is meaningful to them in some way. However, there are a number of other ways in which this connection is expressed, for example, some participants talked about the visual representations that the music conjures up for them as a means to explain this.

As well as emphasising a connection with the music, participants also referred to a sense of connection with images evoked by that music, and these images may be imagined or based on memory of experience (Connell and Davis 2003). Nostalgic images of the physical environment and landscape or of the social environment in the music's place of origin are often conjured up, and as was the case with Jim earlier, these can trigger an affective response through romantic or melancholic feelings. A perception of the cultural distance between the UK and either Scandinavia or Louisiana, may also be the basis of these images, through reflections of the exotic or a perceived 'otherness' that participants find in the music. Amanda visits Sweden every summer, mainly to play music but also to dance and to visit friends that she has made on earlier visits:

. . . there is a lot of modal music in Sweden as well, and so you get these fantastic runs of notes that are so dark, and then suddenly the music will

brighten up and it's like, it's almost like the weather out there, it can be really dull and murky and then suddenly you get the sun breaking through, and that's just like the music. The music reflects the landscape. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

Jack had taken up Scandinavian folk social dance relatively recently but had been to Sweden a few times. He appears to be surprised with himself when explaining the appeal of the music to him:

It appeals in some strange way . . . there's me listening to this bizarre exotic music and its exotic but it speaks to me, it's one step removed, it's not, you know, two or three or four, it's not say the eastern scale, it's still western music. (Jack, 26/08/11)

The majority of these participants do not speak any language other than English, and interviewees spoke in particular about the allure of hearing singing in another language. This element of the exotic and its evocation of otherness and difference is very appealing in Scandinavian music for Maggie, even though only a small proportion of Scandinavian folk dance tunes have vocal accompaniment. She explains the appeal to her:

. . . the fact that it's [the singing] in a foreign language has a real attraction . . . perhaps it is that you want something different, and with a modern element to it perhaps as well. So there's two things maybe the foreign element and, [pauses] maybe . . . the fact that it needs to be something new . . . (Maggie, 07/02/12)

Similarly, Steph is not a French speaker, however, there are many songs in Cajun and Zydeco that are sung in Creole, or Louisiana French<sup>32</sup>. She explains that when she first heard a Cajun song:

Part of the appeal to me was that they were singing in French . . . that was a strong part of it, it is really sexy, there is something about singing in French that I cannot explain. (Steph, 14/05/12)

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<sup>32</sup> Also known as *Kréyol la Lwizyàn*, locally called *Kourí-Viní* and *Pale-Nég*.

Nostalgia and exoticism are therefore strong factors in the appeal of these types of music to participants, often expressed as a *yearning* for an idealised mental image of the past or the unobtainable with all negative emotions filtered out (Davis 1979; Hirsch 1992). The music has meaning as a springboard for the romantic images that it sometimes evokes, as well as in notions about the cultural and physical environment from which the music originated. Its novelty, as something very different to types of folk music found native to the UK, is therefore also an important part of its appeal.

For many Cajun and Zydeco participants, notions of this exoticism were influenced by cinematic portrayals of Louisiana, and by one film in particular. Steph is one of many for whom the film *The Big Easy* (1986) was influential in drawing attention to Cajun and Zydeco. This was a crime drama set and shot on location in Louisiana, the main protagonists being a Cajun family, and the soundtrack therefore included a number of Louisiana Cajun artists:

I think that the first time that I ever heard the music, was in the film, *The Big Easy* I think it is called, and there is a scene in that where . . . they are playing and they are dancing and having like a back garden impromptu party. (Steph, 14/05/12)

It was the music in the film that particularly interested her, but at the time she was not impressed by the dancing, which she only took up years later:

From the film, it was the music, because I don't remember seeing anything in the film like the dancing, and if you go on YouTube you look at the dancing. It doesn't go, 'oh! I want to learn that', you know, a few cowboy-hatted people in Louisiana slouching around a room and you think, nahh. (Steph, 14/05/12)

However, the film was evidently responsible for introducing a significant number of new participants to Cajun and Zydeco, such as Anne:

I originally realised I love Cajun music, when I saw the film *The Big Easy*; to be watched, that is one thing that you have got to do, other people may have mentioned it . . . it got lots of people hooked when that film came out . . . the music just, the Cajun music, it just really did it for me, I absolutely adored it,

and so of course that is why we went to the dance . . . and then from there we just developed on . . . (Anne, 09/04/12)

This film was clearly very influential in drawing the attention of many of the current participants to this style of music and social dancing, and inspired many of them to seek out Cajun and Zydeco in the UK. The film was released just as the dancing was becoming popular in the UK, thus no one mentioned seeing the original screening of the film on its release at cinemas, only the showing of the film on British television in the early 1990s. Kath also spoke of hearing the music from the film on the television in another room, and of enquiring what it was:

It took me just three seconds to fall in love with it completely. But this was the days before the internet, so you couldn't just go and Google stuff. (Kath, 09/04/12)

She goes on to tell a story containing many elements that are familiar to how other participants became involved in folk social dancing. She admits that she felt very brave attending her first Cajun event, and seeing people dancing encouraged her to join in. She continues:

I had never danced before, but I had wanted to learn how to dance, but I was like anybody who is a non dancer it's like, you think it is massively difficult or, you know, it's a bigger deal than it actually is or something like that; and it was to music that I absolutely loved, so I just carried on going. (Kath, 09/04/12)

When asked if she had done any dancing before, she smiled and replied, 'No nothing, I used to go and Pogo.' (Kath, 09/04/12) She soon became a fan of a particular local Cajun band and found them playing in bars and pubs, where sometimes a few people would get up and dance:

. . . every time I knew they were playing somewhere I would go, and I used to watch people dancing, and I used to sit there and think 'I wish I could dance, I wish I could dance, this is not fair, I want to be able to do that' . . . (Kath, 09/04/12)

Kath now recognizes how pivotally important this film was to her, and she has become one of many enthusiasts who travel to most events in the UK, and many in Europe, in pursuit of Cajun and Zydeco music and dancing.

An affective response to the style of music not only stimulates the imagination, but is also often embodied in expression through movement and in the dancing style itself, and the combination of the music and the dance style was also reported to be important for some of those involved. Seeing people dance to these styles of music has therefore also been a source of inspiration to these participants, which has either encouraged them to take up dancing, or to improve their proficiency. For Steph, dancing is a recent interest, and she remembers clearly, when she first attended a Cajun dance event:

. . . there was this lady that I saw at Eddgerford who was so elegant, she was, you know, she was doing some of the intricate partner stuff and she just looked so good. (Steph, 14/05/12)

The experience of seeing this dancer encouraged Steph to take to the dance floor, something she has not regretted. She continues:

. . . once I thought, I think I am doing this okay I think I am dancing this quite well, I thought why haven't; why didn't I get into dancing before this, I could have had years and years of happy dancing. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Sue, who has experienced many types of dance, and for whom watching other dancers is at the root of her learning a new dance explained:

So you're trying to achieve a style, you're trying to look like them, and it's always quite a visual thing for me, I'm trying to do a style and I'm trying to look like that person (Sue, 02/02/12)

Jack has been involved in Scandinavian dance for only few years, but his enthusiasm is boosted by seeing others dancing:

I love the dance, I love the music, and I love dancing to the music . . . that is the major thing. I love the movements of the dance, I love the way the dance looks, I love the way the dance feels. So I see someone who is very good,



say like Anton Schneider, and I think, I want to do that, I want to be able to do that. (Jack, 26/08/11)

Although many dancers would agree with June's statement at the beginning of this chapter, '*that we all have the dance inside us that is our dance*' (June, 22/08/11) they would also suggest that firstly a person has to find the music that will bring out that dance. This was the experience of Maggie, who mentioned earlier that on first hearing Scandinavian folk dance music at a party, she was inspired to dust off her violin and begin to learn how to play the tunes. She could have gone only as far as learning the music, but she explains that this was not the only consequence:

. . . all of this pulled me back into dancing, and I was really pleased because I hadn't thought I would do dancing again, because I couldn't see a dance that I wanted to do. It's finding the one you want to do. (Maggie, 07/02/12)

Her statement supports another common consensus in both groups; that these types of music have been written for dancing to, and that this intention is implicit in the tunes and the style of playing. The following statements are also typical of those involved in these groups:

. . . well the music is infectious, it makes you want to dance. (Lyn, 20/04/12)

Some of the Scandi music I think is totally beautiful . . . I love these sort of melodies that go into Polskas . . . I mean they've got it in them that you want to dance, they get you up. (Helen, 07/02/12)

. . . you know, it's just hearing the music . . . it just makes you want to dance. . . but I mean you know that's what Cajun is about . . . I defy anybody when you take them, you know, to not dance. (Phil, 24/05/12)

This is of course not clear-cut, as many people just love to dance, and not everyone in these groups shares the same ideas about the significance of a particular music. For Mike, it appears to be part of a lineage in musical taste and dancing:

. . . it goes back to the early 60s with the Beatles and the whole rock 'n' roll thing around that time, I always felt, almost a need to dance to music whenever I have heard it. (Mike, 21/06/12)

For most, an affective response to the music has drawn them into the dance, for some dancers, however, the dance style itself is the most important factor, and the music is more a vehicle through which they can enjoy that style. Diane for example, has tried several other types of dance, but states:

. . . for me the attraction is much more the dancing than the music, and sometimes I don't particularly like some of the bands; they are either too fast or I can't hear what they are singing, but I have really enjoyed the dancing.  
(Diane, 07/02/12)

The music may also be an acquired taste that some dancers have learned to enjoy only through dancing to it. Sue for example, is a very experienced folk dancer, being involved in the Society for International Folk Dance for many years, before taking up Scandinavian folk social dance when it became popular:

For a lot of people it's the music I guess, which is really fascinating and deep. I think if I'm honest I've only really grown to love the music through the dance. It wasn't the big spur, for me it was probably the dance itself. (Sue, 02/02/12)

The position is therefore not straightforward, and a variety of relationships to the music and strength of feeling for it were expressed by participants, so it is also interesting, to consider the views of those not involved in a particular dance style. Some participants, for example, have experience of both Cajun and Scandinavian folk social dance, and have an informed opinion about the dance style that they have preferred not to pursue. Tom is an experienced musician and dancer, and is particularly fond of Scandinavian folk social dance. He describes his impression of Cajun and Zydeco in the UK:

I have heard little if any authentic Cajun played by Cajuns. What I have heard people playing over here is really monotonous and samey to my ear, a very solid rhythm but not a lot else . . . I prefer music where there is plenty of melody and some variety in rhythm, which Scandinavian certainly provides.  
(Tom, 07/02/12)

This may be a strong reason for why Tom has not been moved to participate in Cajun and Zydeco music or dance: for him it appears to lack a vital connection to its

place of origin, but also the music just did not appeal. In contrast, Dave was clearly not inspired on his first exposure to Scandinavian folk dance music. He reports:

I found it immensely difficult because I didn't like the music, I can't really hear the emotion in the music, I certainly can't hear the tune; I really, I probably can hear the rhythm, but I didn't like it. (Dave, 07/02/12)

These statements support those of earlier interviewees, in reasserting the importance of a positive response to the music, as the basis to taking up a particular style of dancing and participating in these groups. Anne discovered the importance of individuals' taste in music when she tried to introduce new participants to dancing:

. . . it is very niche, and you have to like that sound. I have noticed that, you know, I have taken lots of friends down to [an event], and only a couple have been interested and find the music appealing . . . So, I don't know, it just, it just works for me, the sound works for me. (Anne, 09/04/12)

Kath found a different way to explain this, however, although she is speaking in the context of Cajun and Zydeco, the same observation is easily applied to Scandinavian dance music, which could also be considered 'very niche'.

Cajun seems to be something, somewhat Marmite music - you either love it or you hate it. (Kath, 09/04/12)

It is clear from all of the statements that a connection to the music plays a pivotal role in whether a person becomes involved in a particular style of folk music and social dance. As mentioned in Chapter 2, neither of these types of music could be regarded as being immensely popular; they are rarely heard on UK radio stations, and before the advent of digital media and the internet, recordings of even the major artists in these genres had been difficult to come by. Notions of exoticism and otherness therefore play a part in creating a connection to the music for some participants, along with a sense of disconnection from the mainstream, discussed in Chapter 4, which binds individuals together as a group. Each individual's response to the music is very personal. In most cases, this connection determines the characteristics of their participation. Although they may explore other types of music and dance, if the music does not appeal to them, then they are unlikely to become fully involved in the events associated with it. In most cases, this connection is

described in terms of an affective response that has a very personal significance and meaning. While this connection to the music forms the foundation for participation, it also leads to further connections, which develop further significance and meaning through participation. One such connection is the relationship that develops between dancers and the musicians who play at the dance events.

### Creating the Performance – the connection between musicians and dancers

Live music plays a very important role in the dance events discussed in this thesis, and participants are keenly appreciative of this, and of the connection that is built between musicians and dancers at these events. In earlier chapters, the involvement of the musician was discussed in terms of participants' notions of generosity and inclusiveness, and of the musicians' contribution to a sense of community. For musicians, the experience of playing for dance is very different to that of playing in pubs or at a concert, and they are generally very aware of the fact that they must make a conscious effort to make a connection with the dancers. This is considered good musicianship, and is therefore the goal of all musicians who are conscientious about playing for dancers. At Scandinavian music workshops, Jill has observed tutors stress the importance of this aspect of musicianship:

. . . they focus very much on playing for dancing even when the dancers were not there . . . some of the teachers made a huge thing about, 'for goodness sake', you know . . . 'watch the dancers, respond to the dancers'; they kind of made me make that connection. (Jill, 01/02/12)

At Scandinavian dances, musicians often stamp their foot loudly and move to the rhythm as they play, reinforcing this connection between musician and dancer. Jim's perspective is from the dance floor and he has observed how musicians move to the music when they are playing:

One thing you see when you see Swedish musicians play, watch them closely and they are dancing with the music . . . they will be dancing as they are playing the music, so . . . they are also expressing the music directly from the hearts and the souls through their bodies, and then that music permeates the dance floor. (Jim, 29/02/12)

The same sense of connection is expressed in the context of Cajun and Zydeco by Phil who as a dancer, who comments about the musicians:

that's what they expect, and if you're not dancing they think they're not playing right. (Phil, 24/05/12)

From the point of view of a musician, this connection is very rewarding. Andy, for example, is an experienced Cajun and Zydeco musician:

I like to see them dancing because I know that they are getting something from what I do, and that is important to me to give them a good time . . . and so it is reciprocal, and if you have got a load of people who totally ignore you, I mean, you don't want to play do you, but you want to play when there is a big crowd and everybody is rockin'; they are all dancing, they are all up for it and there is a big atmosphere that you all feel and that you all buy into. (Andy, 10/07/12)

This is a common point of view amongst musicians:

. . . it's one of the biggest enjoyments, is to see the dancers suddenly laughing and you get that feedback, and I think that's the best thing about the whole thing. (Maggie, 07/02/12)

. . . you get on a real high because you can see people so happy, and actually that is one of the things I love about playing for dancing it is instant result, you know? You know you are doing well, you see people dancing, you can see that they are happy. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

There is clearly a great deal of satisfaction gained from participation in these events through this connection; by musicians who get an immediate sense of satisfaction from practicing their art, and by dancers who appreciate live music that is played well and is danceable. The spontaneity and immediacy of the live music created for these dancers makes each event unique, and this connection becomes a reciprocal relationship as the music and dancers respond to each other. Scandinavian dancer Sue, discussed this aspect of dancing in her interview:

. . . you create the dances of the moment . . . and you respond to the music even if it's mainly the rhythm, you do respond to it, and that's a big sort of, that's a big draw I think. (Sue, 02/02/12)

Similarly, Mike, an experienced Cajun dancer, admits that this is something he has given considerable thought to:

I am always aware of the band on stage even when I am dancing with a partner . . . that connection, sometimes you feel it more than others - the connection between the band and you on the dance floor. (Mike, 21/06/12)

There is also a common understanding between musicians and dancers, of the positive feedback loop that this can create, alluded to by Andy above as '*a big atmosphere*'. Musicians enjoy knowing when they are playing well, and this can be judged by seeing the reaction of the dancers, from the stage the dancers' enjoyment is easy to see, and the musicians gain further enjoyment from seeing this. The positive feelings gained may ebb and flow, but can also build throughout the combined performance of the musicians and dancers, creating a heightened sense of excitement for those involved. This interplay is very important for steering the overall experience, and is enhanced by feelings of inclusion and acceptance, and by a further understanding that there is no audience, only participants.

### Enacting the dance

#### i) Connecting with the dance style

Much of the discussion in Chapter 3 related to how participants connect the practices of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk social dance in the UK, to the places of origin of these dance styles. Discussions so far, about how dancers relate to the music and the dance, have revealed that dancers may connect to the style of dance, in a way that is abstracted from its place of origin. In the same way that members of each group offered contrasting descriptions of their affective response to the music, as being *moody and wistful*, or as being *fun*, for example, so dancers from each group expressed contrasting perspectives on how they view and describe the dancing that they are involved in. Scandinavian folk social dance is described by

both those who take part in it, and those who have been spectators, as a difficult dance style, requiring some amount of physical capability and discipline:

I think you need a certain amount of subtlety to do Scandinavian dance, and learning it, it is a whole different body movement and a different timing . . . you have got to put aside everything else that you have learned in a way, in order to get the Scandi discipline, and I find it slightly hard work. I am getting better at it. (John, 29/02/12)

This style of dancing is therefore seen as challenging, and for that reason it is pursued in particular by those who have previous experience of other styles. Scandinavian dances are considered challenging in ways that many others are not, which Joe expressed technically, and in focusing on this aspect reflected an attitude common to many Scandinavian dancers. Commenting on the appeal of these dances, he states:

. . . they are interesting because the man and the woman are typically doing slightly different things; sometimes they're doing the same thing but they're out of phase, so that you get a sort of a tension in a way; but at the same time when it works you get a fantastically grand feeling out of it, when it works right. So there's challenge but also they're lovely dances to do if you like the music. (Joe, 07/02/12)

Most participants are aware that this is not an easy style to learn and to dance:

I do think that Scandinavian dancing, the Polska in particular, is quite difficult, and I think it is a bit off-putting for people, and it's a shame because actually once you get going it's fine, it's an act of faith you know, you can do it, you can do it. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

Participants indicate that the engagement required with this style of dance is not only physical, and speak of '*the level of complexity*' and an '*element of intellectual challenge*' (Jim, 29/02/12) as being part of its appeal. Tom recalls his initial reaction to experiencing this music and dance style, and why it still appeals to him:

. . . when I first heard it and saw the dancing I thought what on earth is this? I don't really understand what I am looking at or hearing, so it was a bit of a

challenge and it remains a challenge. Dancing Pols and the many, many, many variants of Polska and the different details of how you do it is interesting and challenging. (Tom, 07/02/12)

While an interest and enjoyment of the music may come first, it is apparent that the challenging aspect of the dance is one of the foremost factors in terms of the appeal to Scandi dance participants, and that this is an aspect of the dance which they say makes it feel worthwhile. This was articulated by Jack:

. . . for Scandi dance, for whatever reason, I love it . . . when I see something that I can't do, say like a Boda Polska or whatever; when I couldn't do that to start with, I really wanted to do it. So it's not that it is difficult necessarily, or it is . . . but there are things [dances] that I find more difficult that I can't be bothered with. (Jack, 26/08/11)

An examination of the style of dance itself gives an indication of why many dancers consider it complex or challenging. Scandinavian folk social dance is a far more technical style of dancing than many other types of folk social dance with, for example, many dances that involve the couple dancing very close and turning as they progress around the dance floor. There are a variety of ways in which the turning is achieved depending on the type of dance, and these moves require some instruction in order to be learned and executed safely. The momentum created by two bodies turning at some speed, while at the same time progressing around the dance floor in an anti-clockwise direction, requires awareness of other dancers and the exercise of a great deal of control. Perhaps because of this, Scandinavian folk social dancing is often perceived by non-enthusiasts, as being far more prescribed than other styles of folk social dance, and consequently as lacking in scope for improvisation or self-expression, which may diminish its appeal.

June had tried several types of folk social dancing before becoming especially enthusiastic about Scandinavian folk social dance, but first started dancing by attending Cajun and Zydeco events. She is, therefore, well placed to make an interesting comparison, and being very aware of her own advanced dancing abilities and experience she says, very much tongue in cheek:



Oh, the Cajun became so simple, I mean, Cajun? Anybody can dance Cajun, it's easy. Yes, I just abandoned Cajun. (June, 22/08/11)

One of the elements that enthusiastic Cajun and Zydeco dancers find most appealing, however, is this very simplicity. While it does not have the same types of challenges that Scandi has, the simplicity of Cajun and Zydeco is responsible for drawing in many participants, and for keeping them involved:

. . . the dancing is very, very simple so that it's, it's accessible to a lot of people. (Kath, 09/04/12)

This was also the experience of Steph, who was mentioned earlier as being inspired by a particular Cajun dancer at an event, and found:

. . . it was the discovery that it was fairly easy to do. There was a thing to do, it's not like you do your own thing and you look stupid; there was a thing that you did, and if you could do that, and feel 'I am doing it, I am doing it', you could actually feel good without doing it well, so that was very attractive. It wasn't too complicated; not like Tango where you are constantly striving to get the right frame. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Again, as was pointed out in the discussions about the response to and description of the music, the key word about the appeal of Cajun and Zydeco dancing, is 'fun':

. . . it has got energy and drive in it, the dance is very simple so you're just having fun, and the people are there to have fun. (John, 29/02/12)

There is much more to be said about the comparison of one dance style to another based on the descriptors commonly given by participants in terms of appeal. It is difficult to imagine, for example, how involvement in Scandi would have developed, had it not been considered, like Cajun and Zydeco, to be an activity that is *fun* in some measure. In fact, many of the attributes of participation that are described as fun in Cajun and Zydeco, such as enjoyment of the music, and the importance of social contact, are common to most styles of social dance. The perception of Scandi dancing by its participants as being challenging, is revealing in a number of ways. For example, it reflects the established hierarchy of dance styles discussed in the literature review of this thesis, where the competent achievement of technicality is

perceived of as more worthy than pleasurable recreation. It also suggests a very specific view of *challenging* which is based on technicality; some participants in Cajun and Zydeco, however, consider aspects of their dance style to be challenging in a number of other ways. Discussing the relative difficulty of particular dance styles in terms of the level of challenge that it presents is therefore problematic, this being a very personal perception and a relative term that is dependent on an individual's own background and abilities. The challenge that participants in both styles refer to may therefore be more accurately interpreted as concerning ambition rather than degree of difficulty; an individual's ambition to dance a particular dance style or in a particular way. For many, this ambition shows itself from early on, and follows on from the discovery of a music and style of dance that they really like. Steph had a very particular story:

. . . at the beginning I thought, I want to learn how to do this and I want to learn how to do it well, so I went to the workshops and learnt . . . I like to be constantly learning something, learning how to do something. (Steph, 14/05/12)

Attending workshops was one step towards fulfilling an ambition which had a deep significance for Steph, and she explained with reference to the film *Bucket List* (2007). When I enquired further she told me:

You haven't seen the film *Bucket List*? There are these two very ill old gents and one is very grumpy and the other one isn't, but they start discussing their Bucket List, things they would like to do before they kick the bucket. (Steph, 14/05/12)

She explained further about the film, and that there are a number of things on her own personal bucket list, and then continued:

One of the things on my list was that, at some point in my life I would like to go; I would like to dance a waltz. So when I was dancing a Cajun waltz in this tiny little village hall, part of my psyche said, 'I am doing it, I am doing it, I am dancing waltz I am having a whale of a time, I am supremely happy', I just felt wonderful. (Steph, 14/05/12)

It is an ambition like this, and that of Kath earlier who also was encouraged by seeing dancers at an event, that compels many participants to begin to take up dancing. Some decide that this is something that they would like to be their very best at, and therefore aim very high. Scandi dancer June discussed what motivated her to become a very accomplished Scandinavian dancer:

With me it was definitely this; discovering that I thought I could probably do this reasonably well, and then passionately wanting to be good at it, and wanting to do it and do it, until I could do it really well. (June, 22/08/11)

This resonates very closely with the comments of Jack above, when he was discussing how he approached dances he found difficult such as the Boda Polska, and wanting to be as good a dancer as Anton Schneider. Tom sums up his attitude to this very clearly, and although talking specifically about Swedish dance, what he says is applicable to both Scandinavian and Cajun and Zydeco styles of dancing:

It's loving the music, enjoying the company, and particularly the Swedish music, that's what it's all about, and a bit of a challenge, something that is not so difficult that it's more effort than it's worth, and not so easy that it is trivial. (Tom, 07/02/12)

As well as the personal satisfaction involved in learning a particular dance style, the goal of the social dancer is also to enjoy the working relationship that they build on the dance floor. This enjoyment can be elusive and its intensity variable, depending on how well two dancers work together and, ultimately, how well they understand each other. With experience therefore, a connection to the dance style itself is increasingly accompanied by an appreciation of a connection with the other dancer through the dance.

## ii) Connecting through the dance

The most obvious connection in partnered social dance is that between the two people who form the couple working together on the dance floor. This exchange, and the connections that are created during the dance, are one of the main attractions of couple dancing more generally. Joe emphasised this as an appeal of Scandi dancing, stating that for him:

. . . with the Scandinavian the interest is in the interaction really between what the man and the woman are doing. (Joe, 07/02/12)

In these groups, such relationships are part of the matrix of participation that helps to define these activities in terms of community. As discussed in Chapter 4, community is defined by Esposito, as where the individual is united with others by each party giving, while having no expectation of receiving anything in return, and social dance can exemplify this. Social dance is not choreographed, and two dancers making for the dance floor cannot predict how that particular dance will work out, and in some circumstances, this is totally unknown, as they may not have met before. The dancers must therefore give of themselves in creating a partnership, and once committed to the dance are unable to not give, without withdrawing from the partnership. They therefore commit, having no expectations of their dance partner, and therefore are accepting and open-minded about the outcome. These social connections hold these individuals together as a community. Jim summed up his views on his involvement as:

. . . great in terms of social connection and being with people, and holding someone else and moving with them, and sharing the music and sharing that experience. (Jim, 29/02/12)

The immediacy of sharing and building a working relationship was revealed as being of great importance to many of the dancers, as this relationship allows for inventiveness and articulacy in response to the music. Subtlety of personal style, and creativity and improvisation, are greatly valued, and are a source of fulfilment and satisfaction, which fuels the passion for dancing of all experienced enthusiasts. Dave has danced many styles of dance over many years and is certain what his preferences are based on:

What I usually look for when I am dancing is self-expression to the music.  
(Dave, 07/02/12)

Even as a relative newcomer to social dancing, Steph finds this is an aspect of taking part that appeals to her a great deal:

I enjoy getting up and doing something very physical. I enjoy the opportunity to express yourself, you know. Obviously, you are not just doing the steps,

you are doing something individual, you are doing your style, but you've also got the opportunity to have a dance with your partner, you are adapting what you do. (Steph, 14/05/12)

More experienced dancers in both groups are keen to emphasise the importance of the creative elements of involvement in these styles of dance. In both groups, there is recognition of the freedom for self-expression and the scope to improvise within the dance, which is an aspect of practice that was discussed in Chapter 3, in relation to practice in the place of origin of these dances. Vicki relates this to the underlying theme of 'fun' that many Cajun and Zydeco participants have expressed:

It's a dance that is much more fun when it is [with] somebody who just improvises, so although it is a couple dance and there are moves, or not, then it can be really good fun just to play with it. (Vicki, 27/04/11)

Earlier, Diane described Cajun as '*really quite a creative way of dancing*' (Diane, 07/02/12) when making a comparison with Salsa, and the simplicity of Cajun as practiced in the UK, lends itself to the adoption of a less dogmatic approach to dance style, than Scandi, for example. Many would argue that one of the objectives in these dances is to make a dance entertaining and enjoyable, for both yourself and your dance partner, through improvisation, and by expressing creativity within the limitations of the particular style of dancing involved. There is a much freer approach among Cajun and Zydeco participants than there is to those involved with Scandi, an aspect of practice that was covered in Chapter 3, and on the dance floor, it is possible to observe influences from many other social dance styles, Jive, Salsa and Lyndi Hop being a few examples. The technicality of Scandinavian folk social dance, however, does not deny the dancers this element of creativity, but improvisation within its closely prescribed stylistic limitations, adds to the challenge of its practice. When discussing what she likes about Scandinavian folk dance, Sue, who is also an experienced dancer, relates the ideas of self-expression and creativity to the physical and cognitive challenges of this style of dance:

. . . you're working out the style and you're creating, it's the physical sensation. For me it suits me, the style suits me personally, so yeah, dancing with; creating the dance with a partner, and creating the dance that, in a way

you'll never quite do that dance ever again, whatever it was like. (Sue, 02/02/12)

She goes on to say that the connection and understanding between the two dancers, is very much part of the skill of social dancing that has to be learned and built on through experience. The dancers work together to briefly form a relationship, and this requires high levels of communication between them in order to develop the dance creatively. This can only work if there is a leader and a follower, usually respectively a man and a woman as discussed in Chapter 4, and Sue maintains that the nature of this communication is essentially a negotiation:

I think it's probably the couple, the relationship between the couple, that people who do it, I think that's probably what they enjoy most . . . and the improvisation alongside that, the improvisational quality, the fact that you have to work it out and negotiate it . . . I mean I shouldn't be negotiating at all, obviously because I'm a woman it's obvious I should be following the lead, but of course the man will, even within that, the man wants to create, you know, do a dance that's good for both of you, you know? So it is negotiating, you are negotiating aren't you. (Sue, 02/02/12)

Cajun dancer Kath elaborated on the same theme:

I like dancing and it's obviously my favourite kind of music, so that's the one I really like to dance to, and I like the partner dancing because I like the interaction with the other person. I don't like dancing, bopping around on my own. While that's nice and I occasionally do it, I can take it and leave it, because the interaction with that other person isn't there, where you can together react to the music. (Kath, 09/04/12)

The enjoyment derived from forming this close working relationship is clearly very significant to experienced dancers and forms the foundation for much of the enjoyment of taking part. Participants in many cases elaborated on the significance of this engagement, and discussed aspects of this relationship that may be more difficult to discern from a distanced and uninvolved position. I shall now go on to describe and explain the dance experience from the perspective of those

interviewed, who talked about the connection with a dance partner, and the intimacy of couple social dancing.

### A Vertical Expression of a Horizontal desire ? – connecting with an other

The phrase, 'dancing is a vertical expression of a horizontal desire', or variants of it, may be familiar to many people as a quote attributed to George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) (Knowles 1999; p. 709)<sup>33</sup>, and is one example of how couple dancing has been described. Such a description, however, may be the opinion of those who observe dance but do not take part. During their interviews and in conversations at events, many participants offered their own opinions or explanation of what dance is, and their description of the dance experience. It is therefore important to consider this in discussions about what the meaning of taking part in these activities is to those involved. In this section, I shall therefore discuss the intimacy of dance, and its various meanings to those who take part in these styles of social dance, together with the feelings that dancers expressed when they talked about the dance experience. I shall then move on to discuss some of the interpretations of the meaning of dance offered by those who do dance, as part of an explanation of why dance is important to those involved.

The closeness and intimacy of couple dancing as two dancers work together is more evident in Scandi dancing, where technique is very important as the dancers find a shared centre of gravity and balance. In order to achieve this, experienced folk dancer Tom remarks:

You hold your partner closer when you are dancing a Polska than you do in most other sorts of dancing. (Tom, 07/02/12)

This closeness is discussed in a number of ways by participants. Scandi dancer Jack comments:

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<sup>33</sup> "[Dancing is] a perpendicular expression of a horizontal desire" appeared in the New Statesman 23 March 1962. It has variations that have been attributed to Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and Robert Frost (1874-1963), however no evidence that Wilde or Frost ever wrote or said this has been found. (Knowles 1999; p709)

. . . there must be more of a human frisson with a body right up against you and their hair in your nose, and, you know, you don't feel the need to entertain your partner or entertain yourself, because you are already slightly occupied just by the action of hugging very tightly somebody you don't know. (Jack, 26/08/11)

When discussing the dance experience, observations such as this are common among dancers; Cajun dancer Steph for example expressed it differently:

There is a chemistry of a kind . . . [and] I really, really like that, and it is a way of being with a guy . . . without all the other obligations and expectations. Well, they do come up sometimes with people, but you can fairly easily get around those, and its great I have the opportunity to have that male-female chemistry if you like, without getting into all of the nonsense (laughs). (Steph, 14/05/12)

Both those who take part in social dancing and those who do not, recognise the level of intimacy involved in the closeness of couple dancing in a social context, but there are a number of ways in which this intimacy can be interpreted. A sexual theme is not unusual, and the description of dancing in the humorous quote chosen as the title of this section is an example. This is corroborated more generally by the amorous images, projected by the costumed presentations of couple dances, in many types of ballroom dance seen on television worldwide<sup>34</sup>. Some of the participants interviewed also suggested that one of the appeals of participating in these social dances was sexual, something perhaps alluded to in the descriptions offered by dancers such as those above. Other participants, however, were concerned that the necessary intimacy of couple dancing should not be misinterpreted. Jill, for example, accepts 'the whole idea of the intimacy of two people dancing', but she adds that, 'it's not sexual in any way' (Jill, 01/02/12). Mike also explained:

It is strange, people not knowing dance will sometimes think that the physical closeness is possibly sexual to some degree, but whereas for the people who

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<sup>34</sup> Dance competitions/presentations on Television programmes such as (in the UK) Strictly Come Dancing (BBC One, May 2004 – remember to add year ) now an international franchise in 50 countries called Dancing with the Stars. (BBC News, 2008)



do it, it isn't at all. Yes, so you can have that physical closeness without there being any problems concerned with, you know, the sexual sort of side of relationships; or perhaps you will meet somebody you just happen to be attracted to, but I think that is only as you would if you were playing tennis with them or something or, you . (Mike, 21/06/12)

Mike is clearly sensitive to how the images of couple dancing are projected by the television programmes mentioned above, for example, influencing perceptions of couple dancing generally, and how the intimacy of folk social dance could be misconstrued by those who are not involved. There are, however, participants who would disagree, and would suggest that the flirtatious intimacy of some dances is nothing other than sexual. As well as individual opinions, the type of dance under discussion is clearly important. John, for example, describes Zydeco dancing as:

. . . very raunchy, and very hip moving and sort of; and yes certain foot movement, and, yeh, love it. It has just got energy and sexuality, and it's raw.  
(John, 29/02/12)

Another aspect of this discussion can be taken from several participants who candidly, and in a spirit of spontaneous humour, suggested that 'sex' is one of the main appeals of these styles of dancing. This reaction was shared equally by male and female participants, and for some this was their immediate and emphatic response. As has been demonstrated, humorous comments and light-hearted conversation were not out of place during these informal interviews, but given the influence of person-centred counselling models in the interviews, as discussed in the methodology used in this research in Chapter 1, the use of humour in this context is of interest. A person may use humour, for example, in circumstances when they do not feel comfortable about discussing a particular subject, or if they feel uncertain about how what they say will be received (Beck and Rush et al. 1979). Humour and its associated non-verbal signals have also been identified as serving a number of functions in one-to-one communication, commonly reducing aggression and dissolving tension (Sullivan and Deane 1988). Raskin describes the characteristics of the employment of humour from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, as being the suppression, repression and the discussion of taboo themes, especially of a sexual character (Raskin 1985; p. 148). For the speaker, the use of humour in this type of

context can help to relax interviewer and interviewee, and can allow for more openness in communication (Åstedt-Kurki et al. 1994). Perhaps these participants felt uncomfortable talking about sex; however, the subject entered the conversation unprompted, and so there may be an agreement with this title quote for some.

The kind of relationship involved in these styles of social dancing is, however, far more complex than that suggested by descriptions which most participants that focus on sex, and many would consider these very naïve. Examining how participants describe and feel about the experience of dancing suggests that their response to the music, together with their interaction with the other person, is only a small part of this experience. Many followers on the dance floor for example, close their eyes while dancing, particularly during some of the less dynamic dances. Vicki finds that the experience of dancing as a follower and trusting in her dance partner allows her to be free from responsibility, and is totally absorbing:

Yeh, its good fun, I like it, . . . It is also really nice to dance a two-step, and to get totally lost in the music, and of course being a woman I can just shut my eyes, yeh, I love doing that. Its movement without having to worry about where you are going, or what you are doing, with your eyes shut an' just be totally; be lost in it. (Vicki, 27/04/11)

Being a follower allows Vicki to relinquish a degree of control and responsibility by placing trust in her dance partner, however, this is not a total abdication of responsibility, as each dancer takes over responsibilities according to their role, as discussed in Chapter 4. Generally, it is considered almost an affront to a leader, for a follower to be concerned about navigating around the dance floor, because it implies a lack of trust or ability in the leader. Discussing these roles with dancers at events, followers considered themselves liberated by not having to navigate the busy dance floor, which they said allowed them to be fully absorbed in their own role. Trust is particularly important and must be shared because dancers are working together in a balanced and coordinated way, and in the best-case scenario, this trust should be equal. In some dances, this can be thrilling and exciting as was the case for musician Amanda:

. . . I went on a summer course . . . and they had dancing there and I learnt how to do Polska, and it is the closest thing to flying you can ever imagine, if you do it well. (Amanda, 07/02/12)

Two dancers working together develop this trust while negotiating their own respective styles, and this not only creates the dance of that moment, but is also what separates social dance from other more formal styles of couple dancing. It leads to an experience that is particular to these styles of social dance, which dancers have described as there being '*an other-worldliness about it*', or that '*it takes you to a different plateau*' (fn. 27/10/2010). Others suggest that this experience is akin to being in their own little bubble that is created through their physical engagement with their dance partner, and the music:

I think that you become one with the music and the person, for me that is. I mean a really good dance is where you are beautifully in sync with your partner, and immersed in the music. (Helen, 07/02/12)

Like Vicki above who enjoyed becoming *lost in it*, and others already quoted, dancers also spoke of being '*completely steeped in the music*' (June 22/08/11). Maggie is an experienced musician but also a dancer, and is therefore in a good position to explain further:

I have to say that sometimes if you're really focused on the dancing you don't hear the music . . . because if you're really focused, you block the other thing out; so in other words you're aware of the fact that the music's making you feel good, and it makes you respond with the dancing. (Maggie, 07/02/12)

This statement merits close examination, as it draws attention to two elements in the dancers' perception of the music while dancing: the rhythm and the tune, and a dancers' listening sense can become particularly refined in these live music situations. Rhythm is especially important, and the simple driving rhythms of Cajun and Zydeco must be clear and solid for the dancers. In Scandinavian dance tunes such as the Polska, it is equally important that the idiosyncratic, three-time rhythm, often hidden under sometimes elaborate, stylistic ornamentation, is not obscured because it provides this security for the dancers. The dancers' focus on the rhythm means that this aspect of the music becomes physically and mentally internalised, a

process commonly referred to as entrainment: 'the coordination of temporally structured events through interaction' (Clayton et al. 2004; p. 3). The feeling described by dancers however, as Maggie says above, is that they no longer hear it, even though this is recognised as the most important aspect of the music. As one dancer commented, '*what you do notice is when the band muck up the rhythm, and that can be seriously upsetting*' (fn, 27/10/2010), and when this happens often, it can result in an empty dance floor. In addition, a dance tune could be played badly and in most cases dancers would be more forgiving, '*so long as the beat is there*' (fn, ibid.). The dancer is not therefore listening critically for anything that might be wrong with the tune. It is, however, very often an awareness of variance in the tune, and particularly its expressive qualities, that dancers respond to creatively and with improvisation, and this is what Maggie describes as making her feel good. One dancer likened this to the auditory equivalent of '*one of those tricks of perception that are common in magic tricks*' (fn, 23/01/2011), otherwise known as perceptual or inattentional blindness<sup>35</sup>. This is a lack of attention, or failure to notice a stimulus that is in a person's field of perception, when other attention-demanding tasks are being performed. In terms of dancing to the music, a dancer's attention is very much on the rhythm and their engagement with physical movement, much more than on the tune. However, a dancers' listening sense, with experience, becomes such that they are able to respond immediately to the expressive and unexpected changes in the tune that are common in live music, changes that they convey creatively through a connection with their dance partner. It is this connection between partners that I wish to turn to next.

### Dance as Communicating and Understanding

Dance, as the sociable group activity described in this study, requires types of interpersonal coordination and synchronisation, and in particular communication, that

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<sup>35</sup> Work on inattentional blindness has mostly focussed on the visual sense (cf. Husain and Stein (1988) and more recently Simons and Chabris (1999)). For an overview of work in this field, see Neisser (1979). More recent work, however, has looked into both auditory and visual sense and in particular in relation to driving and mobile phone use (cf. Pizzighello and Bressan (2008); Rees, Frith and Lavie (2001); Halpern, Blake and Hillenbrand (1986); Ely (1975); Wayland, Levin, and Varakin, (2005)).

are unique to the practice of social dance. Dancers have described the enjoyment of the interaction between two dancers as they work together creatively and spontaneously. There is also general agreement amongst dancers in this study about the elemental appeal of music and dance; that it seems natural that a person's response to some music is to move to it. The belief among many participants, such as Jim, is that music and dance have very deep origins, which we tap into when we participate in such activities:

It is an innate part of human nature actually to play music, to make a sound, to move to it, to experience it in this way. (Jim, 29/02/12)

Anne also finds that the enjoyment of music and dancing appeals to her in a very simple way:

there is something fundamental about dance and music that just goes back to complete basics. (Anne, 09/04/12)

This is a notion often explored by scholars seeking to address the question of why people dance, and particular attention has been paid to dance as communication. As part of a recent trend in research, neuroscientists in particular have been exploring new hypotheses in the context of creative activities and communication (Kelly and Garavan 2005; Cela-Conde et al 2004; Calvo-Merino et al 2005; Parsons 2003). For example, neuroimaging studies of movement tasks have suggested that dance may have served as an early form of language (Brown and Parsons 2008). These studies have focussed on the capacity of dance for communication by representation and imitation, and brain activity scans corroborate this idea, supporting the gestural theory of language evolution<sup>36</sup> (cf. Harnad and Steklis 1976; Morten, et al. 2003). Dance Psychology has been attentive to a range of issues to do with the effects of dance on the functioning of the mind, emotional state, perception, and dance as communication (Sheets-Johnstone 1988, 1999; Taylor and Taylor 1995; Brown 2005; Rohleder 2007; Fink et al 2007; Patel 2008; Lovatt 2011, 2013, Lewis 2014). For the majority of these studies, dance has been considered in two ways, theoretically and in the abstract, and preference has been given to styles of dance that are performative rather than participatory. Dance has not been studied

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<sup>36</sup> That language evolved initially as a gesture system before becoming vocal.

extensively in Anthropology, however in the narrow field of dance anthropology it has been examined as communication in the context of ritual behaviour, and as the exemplary gestural language (Spence 1985; Kaeppler 1985; Hanna 1987). These studies have most often examined the meaning of formal and performative dance, and have largely been conducted from the etic perspective of the cultural outsider discussed in Chapter 1. In the research of this thesis, however, folk social dancers talked about the significance of communication in dance in other ways, singling out the sense of touch as especially important.

The extent and importance of communication between the two dancers in couple dancing can be easily overlooked by non-dancers, and can be extremely subtle in many forms of dance, folk social dance being no exception. There is no discussion or planning involved when dancers take to the dance floor, even when two people dance together who have not met before; the tune itself dictates the type of dance and the conventions of the roles of leader and follower determine much of the communication between them. This is also the case during their dance; there are no set routines to be adhered to, and little predictability beyond the style of the dance and the personal styles of the dancers, their dance therefore evolves according to how their individual skills and proclivities are negotiated. Indeed, some Scandi dancers from an International folk dance background refer to Scandinavian folk social dance as being improvised (fn. 12/01/2011). This is because aspects of International folk dance style such as posture or carriage, important in dance presentations, are not considered important in social dance, and the dancers do not follow a set routine and have the creative freedom to inject their own personal style. In this way, the dance mimics the live music that accompanies it, where musicians are afforded a large amount of freedom of expression and interpretation according to the mood of the moment. Once an individual has learnt the basic movements to a particular dance, communication between two dancers is entirely non-verbal, as the two dancers negotiate movements together on the dance floor in response to the music. As in most couple dances, the leaders' role is to control motion and direction and negotiate with other couples as they navigate a route around the dance floor, which is also achieved non-verbally. This kind of negotiation and communication between leader and follower is almost entirely dependent on sense of touch, in particular through the arms and hands, as discussed earlier in Chapter 4.

The hold in couple dance is the primary medium of communication in couple dancing. There are many variations of how dancers hold each other in these styles of dance depending on the type of dance, however, the hold is not a rigid pose, but a loose and relaxed frame. Dancers therefore communicate with each other mostly through variations in their movement of body weight and the firmness of this frame, and through more subtle movements of touch and body shape<sup>37</sup> that are transmitted through the arms and hands. There is a need for both dancers to be sensitive to the other's movements, for each to be open to the messages that the other is giving, and for this balance to be negotiated. Mike for example, describes this as demanding all of his attention:

You are very much dancing for your partner, with your partner, and that is the mutual thing, and everything else is peripheral, excluded, or lost completely.  
(Mike, 21/06/12)

Some dancers find this more difficult than others do, and this type of communicative understanding is learned and cultivated, and develops with experience. There is also an important element of compatibility involved as in any relationship, and some dancers work better together than others. The importance of trust has already been discussed and demonstrated through comments such as from Vicki who spoke about closing her eyes while dancing and becoming lost in the music. Trust is therefore one of the elements of couple dancing that has to be negotiated and become established between two dancers, particularly when they may have never danced together before, as is often the case. However, a dancer can very often feel when their partner has relaxed and is comfortable with the partnership, as there is a loosening of resistance and movements become attuned, signalling that a level of trust has been established. This type of connection can also reveal how a dancer is feeling more generally, and the establishment of this relationship can be meaningful and edifying. Aspects of a person's personality can also be exposed. As one dancer described it, it is an understanding '*built on knowing how they move and how they touch you*' (fn 27/10/13), which can reveal levels of sensitivity, assertiveness, and general temperament.

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<sup>37</sup> The communication involved here depends almost entirely on the senses, to this extent couple dancing is always sensuous (Oxford definition), at times the intensity of this communication and the intimacy through touch that this involves, is mistaken as being sexual.

Past experience has much to do with the choices of dance partner in a social dance setting, and an established connection in this way is often a strong influence on this choice. Regular attendees at these events, such as Sue earlier, understood that each dance is a unique creative moment, and that there are particular people who they would like to share it with, and with whom they have a connection through dance. Anne for example stated:

there are some tunes that I really know and love, and I think, I must have this dance with X. (Anne, 09/04/12)

The converse is also the case and examples were offered of decisions to avoid dancing with a particular individual due to a dislike of that person's temperament or manner.

The situation where two women dance together serves to demonstrate many of the points made in this chapter, and during the course of this research female participants referred to this situation on a number of occasions. It is quite common for women to dance together at the events I have described, although there are also women who choose not to dance with other women, and a few women who will only dance with other women. This is especially the case at events where there are more women than men, but occurs at most dances irrespective of the gender balance. Sometimes the partnership does not work, however, when it does, what these women mention is '*the amazing understanding of the other person*' that they experience, which can be '*extraordinary*' (fn 23/01/13). What is clear from these discussions is the importance of an understanding of the roles of leader and follower, which in these circumstances has to be negotiated, and determines the measure of the experience. A good understanding of these roles allows a more intense connection to be established irrespective of which sex the dancing partner might be, and many women spoke of not having a preference, thus reinforcing this assertion.

## Conclusion

The discussion of the dance experience in this chapter has focussed on a variety of connections that participants talked about in their interviews, which are established in their practice and are meaningful and significant to them. The case studies of two



very different and contrasting folk social dance styles reveals commonalities which suggest that it is possible to glean some general points about engaging in music through folk social dance, and indeed the significance of social dance more generally. The similarities are about the connections made by participants in the social processes and experience of dance. The foundation of most participants' involvement in a particular dance style is their connection with the style of music. Irrespective of whether participants perceive this music as esoteric (Scandi) or exoteric (Cajun and Zydeco), it is frequently described by them as being both 'exotic' (or not within the mainstream) and, at the same time, meaningful and often affecting. In addition, for some, the music was also described as personally meaningful because it has associations through images or memory, for example, which enhance their feelings about it. The net result of this is that these participants find the music and dance to be immersive and absorbing, and that it stimulates positive emotions.

This engagement with the music is further translated into an engagement on a social level, where positive relationships are formed through the connection that is established between dancers. In these styles of social dance, as discussed in the previous chapter, learning the dance involves learning much more than the moves, and includes adopting an agreed value system. This chapter has discussed an additional, more subjective, level of learning which includes learning the non-verbal communication required in order to connect with another dancer. This involves the development of an understanding of the physical connection that is formed between dancers, which opens the possibility for them to articulate something about their personality, and declare their own individuality through creativity and self-expression. Further, this type of connection is an essential part of the working relationship which is created that allows dancers to develop an understanding of the other person through dance. The opportunity for creativity and self-expression was described by participants as highly satisfying as it leads to a sense of self-actualisation through dance.

These connections can be seen as resulting in a great number of benefits felt by those involved, individually, and on a wider social level. Working together and developing understandings in this way, not only works between a couple dancing, but on a larger scale, acts as the cement for the feeling of community and belonging discussed in Chapter 4. Similarly, there is also a sense of accomplishment felt by

participants, not only in learning the skills involved in dancing or playing for dance, but through their involvement in creating the event and helping to sustain these practices. Involvement meets with high levels of satisfaction among participants and many talk of a 'post-festival glow', and about feeling greatly invigorated by having taken part. In addition, their involvement in social dance events has become immensely important to them, to the extent that they report it as being a type of addiction, where events cannot be missed for fear of missing their 'fix'. Participants thus recognise their involvement to be beneficial on a personal and a social level, leading to greatly enhanced feelings of general wellbeing. It is these benefits, which have been outlined in this and the previous chapters, that will be the topic of the final chapter under the general umbrella term of wellbeing.

## Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis, I explained how this study came about as a result of my being challenged by, and curious about some of the views that I encountered when I attempted to explain folk social dance to people who had not come across it before. I had only stumbled across one of these events myself, and at the time had not appreciated how much these practices were largely hidden from view. I was further stimulated to undertake this research when I realised that there have been no in-depth studies of groups that practice folk social dance in the UK, such as those that are the subject of this thesis, and in my earlier work.

This thesis spans a number of areas of study that have hitherto been neglected in their various fields. Firstly, within popular music studies, folk has received considerably less attention when compared to other genres such as rock, metal, punk, or hip-hop, and is possibly underrepresented within academia generally. This study also concerns amateur music making, which as Finnegan points out, is also an area of music study that has not been explored extensively through scholarly research (Finnegan 1989). Secondly, in dance studies, folk dance has received far less attention than what are considered by some to be more 'serious' dance forms such as contemporary or art dance, and the possible reasons for this have been discussed in the introduction to this thesis. In addition to this, social dance, has until recently also attracted little scholarly interest and therefore has received far less attention in dance studies than more formal styles of dance in a presentational setting (Siegle 1998). Compounding these points, dance itself, as an area of study has been given far less weight than the study of other art forms (Karkou 2012). This thesis has addressed the lack of research in these areas, while at the same time it attends to the acknowledged lack of scholarship around the connection between popular music and dance practices (Cohen and Fairley 2006).

The focus of this research is social dance and wellbeing, and this study contributes to this area of research from a perspective that differs from the majority of work that looks into the benefits of dance to health and wellbeing. These studies have been largely based on research conducted in a clinical setting and have involved a spectrum of approaches, such as neuroimaging techniques, hormone analysis, and

statistical sampling involving physiological measurements; the work in this thesis adds a new dimension to their findings. Clinical research for example, has found that production of the hormone oxytocin, is increased through positive social interaction and physical contact (Uvnäs-Morberg 1998), and that it helps when coping with stress, and can produce feelings of wellbeing (Quiroga Murcia and Kreutz 2010; p. 128). This is corroborated in this thesis, where the discussion concerns the dance experience (Chapter 5), and in particular the connections made between two dancers, and this suggests that touch and physical closeness in social dance are important areas that would be valuable to explore in further research. The research reported in this thesis therefore, complements these clinical studies and supports calls for further research outside the clinical environment that looks at the long-term benefits of involvement in amateur dancing (Quiroga Murcia and Kreutz 2010).

This study took a particular perspective to answering the research question; 'What is the meaning and significance of participation in these folk music and social dance styles to those taking part?' This was deliberately a very open question, which was also designed to suggest the grounded and humanistic approach taken to information gathering, which was also a key aim of the research. The approach and methodology used, allowed participants in the research to make a significant contribution to the focus of the research. The thesis offered an interpretive account of these social settings, establishing the importance and relevance of involvement to participants. The research methodology was also effective in helping to reveal the concerns and interests of those involved in social folk dancing, without imposing an agenda that may not have been intrinsically meaningful to participants in these social settings. This research was successful in providing an interpretive account that suggests that participation was meaningful because it contributes appreciably to individual wellbeing, and therefore has significance in the lives of those taking part because of this.

The practices of Cajun and Zydeco, and Scandinavian folk music and social dance were chosen as case studies because they offered many contrasts but also presented a great number of similarities. This research employed an ethnographic methodology in order to create a qualitative interpretive account of the social settings in the case study. It involved acquiring research evidence according to the two

principle methods used in ethnography, which prioritises participant observation, and interviews. However, in this research context, participant observation was considered to be an inappropriate term to use, as it did not adequately describe the process of transition from etic to emic perspective, and therefore the term 'immersive involvement' was coined. In addition, those taking part in these groups objected to the term, as they construed participant observation as having sinister connotations that conflict with the notion of involvement in these activities. Members of these groups felt uncomfortable with the term participant observation because they perceived a direct link between observation and audience, and a key idea behind these groups is that there is no audience. Notes from this involvement were made retrospectively, but importantly away from events, so as not to influence or disturb what was going on; similarly, interviews were also conducted away from the social settings for the same reason. Interviews involved only two open questions, as this allowed interviewees to steer the conversation in whatever direction they thought was most relevant. The discussions in interviews were taken as the primary source of information that was used to direct the research in tandem with information gathered through immersive involvement. The methodology employed was therefore designed to complement the research question, and was an attempt to allow participants to make a significant contribution to defining the focus of the research within the academic agenda of a research PhD.

## Findings

This study adopted an ethnographic approach that privileged the lived experience of participation in these two styles of folk social dance. This approach recognises that wellbeing has both subjective and objective elements, and is based on positive feelings to do with happiness and fulfilment. Wellbeing therefore 'connotes being well psychologically, physically, socioeconomically and . . . culturally' (Mathews and Izquierdo 2010; p. 18). Furthermore, the ethnographic view is that there is not one state, condition or approach to wellbeing, as it can mean different things in different places, societies and cultural contexts, but that there are a multiplicity of meanings of wellbeing. The research within this social setting revealed a wealth of beneficial social and personal outcomes that were a result of involvement in these activities,

and these were expressed as positive relationships and experiences that participants talked about freely. These included a sense of affinity and inclusion and therefore engagement with the social setting; supportive and cooperative relationships that are affirmative and which have singular levels of connection and communication; and feelings of accomplishment and consequently, empowerment.

The findings of this research revealed that the social in folk social dance is often considered by participants to be more important than the dance itself. The research revealed a wealth of beneficial social and personal outcomes that were a result of involvement in these activities, and these were expressed as positive relationships and experiences that participants talked about freely. The methodology that was applied in this research was effective in uncovering the issues that were of importance to those involved in these two folk social settings in order to shed some light on the meaning and significance of their involvement. The findings of this research have been reported under the four headings of organisation, practice, participation, and the dance experience, and each of these chapters concluded by highlighting a number of benefits that participants experienced as a consequence of their involvement. The participants interviewed were clear about their commitment to their particular dance style, and imagined their involvement would continue into the foreseeable future, and that folk social dancing would remain a social hub in their lives. There was also a perception that the events they attended had a lasting affect beyond the event itself, and that this benefited them more generally in their everyday life. These benefits have therefore been interpreted within a framework of enhanced individual wellbeing.

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, an agreed definition and criteria for wellbeing has yet to be devised, and therefore due to this absence, a clear model for wellbeing has not been established. However, the largest use of data in order to assess individual wellbeing, was a study, carried out by The New Economics Foundation (NEF) in 2007, which used the results of psychometric tests on 44,000 individuals, in order to establish a National Index of Wellbeing for 22 countries in Europe (Murphy 2008). This used seven components belonging to the two sets of criteria, personal wellbeing and social wellbeing, and these components can be compared with the results of this research in order to explain the meaning and significance of participation in these groups in terms of individual wellbeing.

i) Personal wellbeing

In the NEF study, the measurement of personal wellbeing was based on five self-evaluative criteria for assessing physical and emotional state and outlook, the five components were; emotional wellbeing, life satisfaction, vitality, resilience and self esteem, and positive functioning. While some of these components, such as vitality and life satisfaction are difficult to assess without carrying out similar psychometric tests to the ones conducted in the NEF study, the results from the research for this thesis do give many indications of positive evaluations of these components by participants.

Overwhelmingly, the research participants reported feeling positive emotions about their involvement in folk social dance practices. This not only indicates beneficial effects as a result of taking part, but the frequency and consistency of these responses suggest high levels of emotional stability to do with their involvement. The findings also indicate high levels of engagement with both the activity of dancing and sociality, the experience being described by participants as being absorbing and immersive. These results, while contributing to personal wellbeing through the components of emotional wellbeing and positive functioning, are also associated with social wellbeing as they affect supportive relationships and feelings of a sense of trust and belonging.

This study also found that involvement in folk social dance had a beneficial effect of positive functioning as indicated through self-evaluated high levels of competence and engagement. For example, participants described feeling satisfaction and accomplishment as a result of taking part in these social dance events. This was also derived from their involvement with both the physical activity of dancing and socially through being able to navigate the uncommon social relationships involved in the social dance setting, such accomplishments revealing high levels of competence. It has also been shown that participation can be described in terms of a number of connections that represent engagement on a number of levels. Participants described a connection with the music as a result of their affective response to it, and a connection with their dance partner through working together and in so doing developing an understanding of the other. Participants also discussed their connection with other participants such as the musicians, in creating

a performance with no audience. The varied ways in which connections were made indicate high levels of engagement that contribute to high levels of personal wellbeing.

With an analysis such as this it may be easy to lose sight of the fact that these components are interconnected, and belong to a single entity, and therefore cannot be treated in isolation. The positive emotions and relationships that are evidenced in this thesis are therefore likely to have a positive impact on all of the components of wellbeing as they interact with each other. A likely outcome therefore is that components, such as vitality, life satisfaction, and resilience and self-esteem, which may be difficult to assess through these interviews, would also measure in high levels, and therefore would contribute toward enhanced personal wellbeing. It is also important to point out the interaction between personal wellbeing and social wellbeing, without the former, it is unlikely that the later is possible. I shall therefore now go on to report what the findings of this research indicate in terms of the social wellbeing of the participants in this study.

## ii) Social wellbeing

In the NEF report, the assessment of social wellbeing was based on individuals' perceptions of the two components of supportive relationships, and trust and belonging, which can therefore be defined within the context of this thesis in the following ways. The component of supportive relationships concerns a perception and understanding of 'the extent and quality of interactions in close relationships' (Murphy 2008; p. 21) with friends and other participants who provide support in their folk social dance group. The component of trust and belonging can similarly be defined, as concerning 'a sense of belonging with and support from' (ibid.) fellow participants, which results from trusting them and equally 'being treated fairly and respectfully by them' (ibid.). From the findings of the research reported in this thesis, high levels of social wellbeing are perceived by the participants in folk music and social dance activities who took part in this study.

Folk social dance participants in this study described their experience of involvement as being supportive and cooperative. This was felt generally about their involvement in this social setting, and was most clearly illustrated when participants compared their experience of folk social dance, with taking part in other styles of dance they



had been involved in. Participants stated that one of the appeals of folk social dance, was that the social environment was not competitive, and was far more supportive than that of the other dance styles that they talked about. One situation where support and cooperation were demonstrated was in dance workshops, which were described as being welcoming, inclusive and accepting. It has been shown that workshops were the place where these behaviours were demonstrated and encouraged, and therefore learned with the details of the dance style itself. In this way, these behaviours were passed on to beginner dancers, who were then able to accept these as part of the social norms at events of these participatory dance styles. There are other examples of supportive relationships that develop in this social setting, such as those that lead to a safe, non-threatening environment, and the creation of close working relationships on the dance floor, and are illustrative of the types of supportive relationships that have been revealed in this thesis.

These supportive relationships encouraged a sense of connection and engagement with others attending a dance event, and this laid the foundation for a sense of trust and belonging. Participants were aware that events and activities are organised and managed such that organisers do not make a personal profit, and this has been shown to be very important to those involved. Organisers were understood to be motivated by a passion for the style of music and dance, and therefore events and activities were perceived of as being organised by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. Feelings of affinity and inclusion were generated as a consequence of the absence of a profit motive, and participants were accepting of the consequences of events operating within their means. Additional outcomes are that events do not lack support, and at events, participants demonstrate this through cooperation and commitment. The sense of a common purpose, and the understanding of social norms learned at workshops, such as being inclusive and accepting, supported feelings of security and trust, and belonging to a community at each event attended.

### Limitations

This ethnographic study, in common with other research that uses this methodology, has limitations that are acknowledged within ethnography, and it is recognised that this study can only be an interpretation of the social setting, and that there are many

ways in which it is partial. This was covered in the discussion of the methodology in Chapter 1, and in particular reference was made to Clifford Geertz's statement that ethnographies are constructions of reality and not reality themselves (Geertz 1988), and Hastrup who described ethnographies as a meeting of anthropology and autobiography (Hastrup 1992). This underlines the crucial importance of reflective practice in the application of an ethnographic methodology, and clarity and discussion of the position of the researcher in relation to the researched.

There are also limitations in ethnographic research due to its reliance on interviews and participant observation, which are dependent on who is selected for interview and the experience of the researcher in the field. Information gathered from interviews in particular depends on the articulacy of those interviewed, and therefore favours particular individuals. In addition, for some of those involved in the social setting, the answer to questions asked in an interview may be considered self-evident, rather than requiring explication (Wolcott 1999). These limitations indicate that another researcher interested in the same social setting, may produce a different set of field notes and results from interviews, and would offer another framework for interpretation.

Further limitations to these findings are evident because this is a small case study in a large area of research that has not received a great deal of attention, further case studies are needed in order to validate the findings of this study. Further research such as this would then make it possible to confidently suggest general ideas about the value of participation in these types of social settings. A methodology that privileges the contribution made by those involved in the social setting in order to direct the focus of research, also leaves many valuable areas of interest not covered. While the findings in this research are of value and importance themselves, the methodology employed could be regarded as providing the foundation of further research that takes a more targeted approach, and this is what I shall move on to discuss in the following section.

## Implications

The research reported in this thesis has a number of implications for how we understand dance in a social context, that have the potential to influence policy and practice, and that suggest a number of areas for further research. Clinical research has shown the physical benefits of dance, however, the research in this thesis suggests that taking a more holistic view, that also takes account of how dance activities are organised, could result in further beneficial outcomes in terms of the health and wellbeing of those involved. It therefore gives new insights into for example, communication through touch and close physical proximity, and how activities involving social dance could be managed. The benefits of involvement in social dance, revealed by clinical research, are well documented, and are complemented and greatly enhanced with this research. The implications of this are that these findings can be used to support projects that are geared towards enhancing wellbeing, where one route would be to introduce social dance into peoples' lives.

This study approaches aspects of wellbeing that have so far been largely unconsidered, and this reflects the use of a methodology that focuses on participants as individuals, and that is grounded in what they have to say. Many studies in fields such as medicine and nursing have applied ethnographic techniques to improve the quality of their research; however, the ethnography in this thesis employs a reversal of this trend, by applying knowledge from other fields to the ethnographic study. The increased level of sensitivity achieved by doing so, and by taking an interdisciplinary approach, has influenced both the gathering of information and the understanding of this information. This type of approach to ethnography greatly enhances the quality and validity of the study, and has implications for its productive employment in further ethnographic studies in the future.

The findings in this thesis, can be seen as a springboard for further studies into the positive outcomes in terms of health and wellbeing, for those who participate in social dance. Further studies are needed in order to improve our understanding of the role that social dance can play as a communicative medium, and as an organised social activity, by looking at other styles of social dance and their practices. Many styles of dance in a great number of circumstances are grouped

together as 'social dance', and often the use of the term appears to be synonymous with amateur dance. Such research would therefore look for a clear definition of social dance and its many variations, and from this would attempt to determine whether certain styles and approaches are more advantageous to health and wellbeing than others.

There are also a number of implications more generally, that come about as a result of applying an ethnographic understanding to the concept, definition and study of wellbeing. This type of approach assumes that, because of their broadly common physical and genetic makeup, there are certain qualities and attributes that people share, and on this basis, that they experience the world in fundamentally the same way. It also assumes that in general, people share a preference for love rather than hate (within their particular human group), freedom from pain over experiencing pain, and meaning over meaninglessness (Mathews and Izquierdo 2010). People in all cultures and societies therefore have a common interest in living happy and fulfilling lives, and how they experience their closeness to attaining this can be the basis for describing their 'wellbeing'. For example, the participants in this study reported that their experience of involvement in these styles of dance was very emotionally positive and enormously rewarding and satisfying, and that it was a vital ingredient adding to their quality of life generally. However, because of linguistic or cultural obstacles, what may be understood by happiness and fulfilment, and therefore wellbeing, can be distinctly different in different cultures, places and settings (Mathews 2006), and this can be difficult to overcome. The ethnographic viewpoint therefore, assumes that there is no single state or condition of wellbeing, but a multiplicity of ways to pursue wellbeing. The experience of wellbeing is then culturally specific, and ethnographic accounts can indicate how wellbeing is conceived of, expressed, and experienced in different settings. Further studies that produce accounts such as these can therefore provide a nuanced portrait of people in different cultures, and social settings, that can inform us of how they approach and conceptualise wellbeing, and in so doing, indirectly cause us to reflect on our own perceptions and pursuit of wellbeing.

## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Events attended

Date	Event	Duration of event	Type of event	Approximate Attendance <sup>2</sup>
14 – 16/01/2011	Tideswell (Scandi)	weekend	annual	70
28 - 30/01/2011	Gloucester Cajun and Zydeco Festival	weekend	annual	200
18 – 23/02/2011	Kinnersley Eurodance (Scandi)	four days	annual	60
26/03/2011	Ketton (Scandi) dance workshop	afternoon	occasional	12
6 – 10/05/2011	Scandimoot, North Yorkshire	Bank Holiday weekend	annual	80
15 – 18/09/2011	Hartington (Scandi)	weekend	annual	50
14 – 16/10/2011	Bristol Cajun and Zydeco Festival	weekend	annual	200
19/11/2011	La Fontaine, Gloucester (Cajun and Zydeco)	evening	monthly (approx)	30
20/11/2011	Bristol Scandi	afternoon	annual	30
13 – 15/01/2012	Tideswell (Scandi)	weekend		70
27 - 29/01/2012	Gloucester Cajun and Zydeco Festival	weekend	annual	200
22 – 26/02/2012	Kinnersley Eurodance (Scandi)	four days	annual	60
09 – 11/03/2012	North Yorkshire Cajun and Zydeco Festival	weekend	annual event <sup>1</sup>	100
20 – 23/04/2012	Scandimoot North Yorkshire	Bank Holiday weekend	annual	60
30 and 31/03/2012	Louisiana Night, Cardiff (Cajun and Zydeco)	two days	one-off	80
18 – 20/05/2012	Birthday Party (Cajun), North Wales	weekend	one-off	80
15/06/2012	File Gumbo, London (Cajun)	evening	monthly (approx)	50
16/06/2012	Cajun Barn, London	evening	occasional	40
26/06/2012	File Gumbo, London (Cajun)	evening	monthly (approx)	50

17 – 19/08/2012	North Shropshire Cajun and Zydeco Big Weekend	weekend	annual event <sup>1</sup>	100
21 – 23/09/2012	Hathersage (Scandi)	weekend	annual	50
19 – 21/10/2012	Bristol Cajun and Zydeco Festival	weekend	annual	200
11/11/2012	La Fontaine, Gloucester (Cajun and Zydeco)	evening	monthly (approx)	30
19/11/2012	Bristol Scandi	afternoon	annual	30

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These were new events and these were first occasions that they had been held.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers attending events can vary from one year to the next, what is given is an average and an approximation.

## Appendix B

### Details of Interviewed Participants

Name <sup>1</sup>	Music/ Dance Style <sup>2</sup>		Where Interviewed <sup>3</sup>	Geographical Region <sup>4</sup>	Date interviewed
Alan	Scandi	Musician	At home	West Midlands	22/06/12
Amanda	Scandi	Musician <sup>6</sup>	At home	London	08/02/12
Andy	C&Z	Musician	A local bar	South Wales	10/07/12
Anne	C&Z	Dancer	At home	London	09/04/12
Dan	Scandi	Musician	At home	North East	25/04/12
Dave	Scandi	Dancer	At home	London	09/02/12
Diane	C&Z	Dancer	A local cafe	London	08/02/12
Frank (and Lyn) <sup>5</sup>	C&Z	Dancers	A local bar	North Wales	20/04/12
Geoff	C&Z	Dancer	At home	North East	17/06/12
Helen	Scandi	Dancer	At home	London	09/02/12
Jack	Scandi	Dancer	At home	North West	26/08/11
Jenny	C&Z	Dancer	A local bar	North Wales	28/05/12
Jill	Scandi	Musician	A local cafe	London	07/02/12
Jim	Scandi	Dancer	A local cafe	North East	29/02/12
Joe	Scandi	Dancer	A local bar	London	08/02/12
John	C&Z	Dancer	A local cafe	West Midlands	29/02/12
Jude	C&Z	Dancer	At home	London	30/07/12
June	Scandi	Dancer	At home	North West	22/08/11
Kath	C&Z	Dancer	A local bar	South East	09/04/12
Maggie	Scandi	Musician <sup>6</sup>	At home	London	07/02/12
Mike	C&Z	Dancer	At home	North East	21/06/12
Pete	C&Z	Dancer <sup>6</sup>	At home	London	30/07/12
Phil	C&Z	Dancer <sup>6</sup>	At home	North West	24/05/12
Rick	C&Z	Musician	At home	East Midlands	13/08/12
Steph	C&Z	Dancer	A local bar	South West	14/05/12
Steven	Scandi	Musician	At home	East Midlands	19/10/11
Sue	Scandi	Dancer	A local cafe	London	09/02/12
Tom	Scandi	Dancer	At home	London	07/02/12
Vicki	C&Z	Dancer	A local cafe	West Midlands	27/04/11
<sup>7</sup>	Scandi	Musician	A local cafe	London	08/02/12



Additional information received by email:				
Sally	C&Z	Former editor of Cajun Times		05/01/13
Lucy	C&Z	Details about Swamp Rock Cafe		07/01/13
Paul	C&Z	Details about Cajun UK website		14/02/12

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym used in this study to preserve anonymity

<sup>2</sup> The role that the participant plays the majority of the time at events. Some musicians on occasions may also dance, and some dancers may also join in playing (see Note <sup>6</sup> below)

<sup>3</sup> The location that the interview took place

<sup>4</sup> The area of the country where the participant lives

<sup>5</sup> All interviews were conducted one to one with only the interviewer and the interviewee present, with the exception of this interview, Frank and Lyn. Frank was the person being interviewed, however, his partner, Lyn, was also present at the interview and her enthusiasm did get the better of her on two occasions during the interview, causing her to interject with relevant information and points for clarity, which have been used in the thesis.

<sup>6</sup> While most of those interviewed referred to themselves as either a dancer or a musician, these individuals emphasised that they took part in both activities.

<sup>7</sup> Interview not used due to considerable background noise at the interview site (see page 52)

## Appendix C – Standard Occupational Classifications (2010) produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2010)

### General nature of qualifications, training, and experience for occupations in SOC2010 major groups

Group	Group Descriptor	General nature of qualifications, training and experience for occupations in the group
1	Managers, directors and senior officials.	A significant amount of knowledge and experience of the production processes and service requirements associated with the efficient functioning of organisations and businesses.
2	Professional occupations	A degree or equivalent qualification, with some occupations requiring postgraduate qualifications and/or a formal period of experience-related training.
3	Associate professional and technical occupations	An associated high-level vocational qualification, often involving a substantial period of full-time training or further study. Some additional task-related training is usually provided through a formal period of induction.
4	Administrative and secretarial occupations	A good standard of general education. Certain occupations will require further additional vocational training to a well-defined standard (e.g. office skills).
5	Skilled trades occupations	A substantial period of training, often provided by means of a work based training programme.
6	Caring, leisure and other service occupations	A good standard of general education. Certain occupations will require further additional vocational training, often provided by means of a work-based training programme.
7	Sales and customer service occupations	A general education and a programme of work-based training related to Sales procedures. Some occupations require additional specific technical knowledge but are included in this major group because the primary task involves selling.
8	Process, plant and machine operatives	The knowledge and experience necessary to operate vehicles and other mobile and stationary machinery, to operate and monitor industrial plant and equipment, to assemble products from component parts according to strict rules and procedures and subject assembled parts to routine tests. Most occupations in this major group will specify a minimum standard of competence for associated tasks and will have a related period of formal training.

Group	Group Descriptor	General nature of qualifications, training and experience for occupations in the group
9	Elementary occupations	Occupations classified at this level will usually require a minimum general level of education (that is, that which is acquired by the end of the period of compulsory education). Some occupations at this level will also have short periods of work-related training in areas such as health and safety, food hygiene, and customer service requirements.

## Appendix D

### Pre- Interview Information Sheet.

In compliance with University of Liverpool ethics procedures.



## FOLK MUSIC AND SOCIAL DANCE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN – A PROJECT CONDUCTED BY PAUL KIDDY

### INFORMATION SHEET AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

I would like to invite you to participate in a doctoral research project looking at Folk Music and Social Dance in Contemporary Britain, which is part of my studies at the University of Liverpool, School of Music. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for me to explain to you why I am asking you to take part and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and feel free to ask, if you would like to know more or if there is anything that you are uncertain about, and to discuss it with others if you wish. Finally, of course, you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. Thank you for reading this.

This study aims to explore the significance and meaning of Folk Music and Social Dance as it is actually practised and is therefore centred on the experiences of the people involved. Everyone who participates in it has unique and valuable experience which could contribute to this study, and you are one of a number of people who are being invited to participate through informal discussion about your involvement. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation and without any disadvantage.

The discussion will be with me (Paul Kiddy) and will be recorded and later transcribed into written form. These recordings and transcriptions will be treated as confidential, and will be stored electronically and securely on Liverpool University's main computer. Other than contact details, no personal details will be kept and when these discussions are used in the research, participants will be treated anonymously and all names will be changed.

All those taking part in any University of Liverpool ethically approved study are covered by the University's insurance scheme, and taking part in this study is free from any perceived personal risk. There are no intended benefits and reimbursements.

I do hope that you will be happy to take part in this project, however, if at any stage there is a problem or if you would like me to explain more about this study, please feel free to let me know (contact details below) and I will be more than happy to provide further clarification. Alternatively you may contact the Research Governance Officer on 0151 794 8290 ([ethics@liv.s.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.s.uk)) with details of the difficulty.

If there are any further questions at any stage please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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## **Appendix E**

### Post-Interview Consent Form

In compliance with University of Liverpool ethics procedures.



## CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** Folk Music and Social Dance in Contemporary Britain

**Researcher(s):** Paul Kiddy

**Please  
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. ☐
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
 Paul Kiddy		
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

**The contact details of lead Researcher (Principal Investigator) are:**

Paul Kiddy  
University of Liverpool  
School of Music  
80 -82 Bedford Street South  
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Version 2:1, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, PK

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